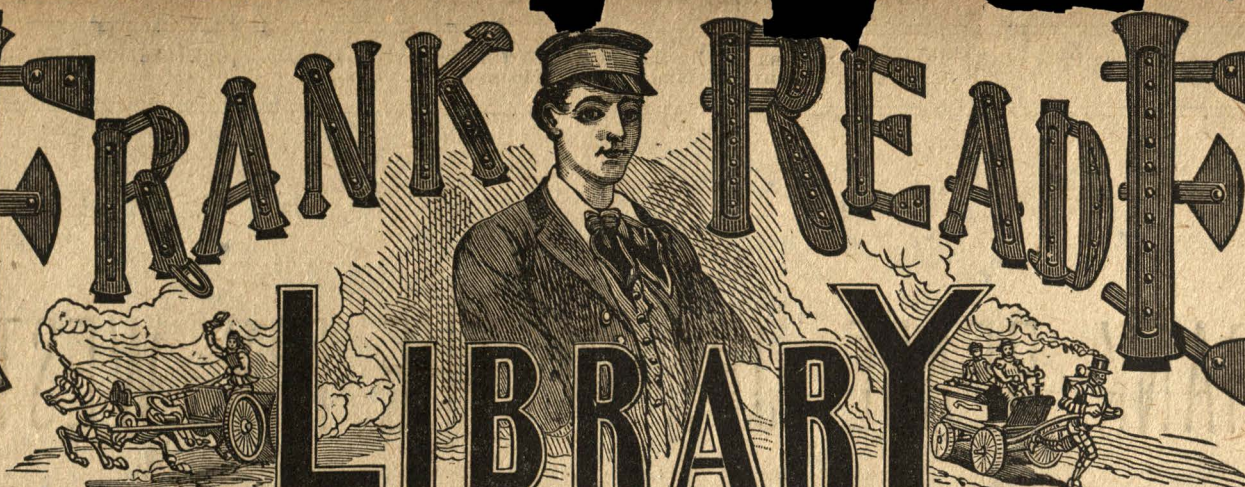


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FRANK READE, JR.,

IN THE FAR WEST; or,
THE SEARCH FOR A LOST GOLD MINE.

By "NONAME."



The vigilantes came charging back again, and as Frank Reade ran for the tally-ho one of the vigilantes skillfully cast a lasso at him. The succeeding moment Frank was jerked backward and surrounded by the enraged vigilantes.

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FRANK READE, JR., IN THE FAR WEST.

OR,

The Search for a Lost Gold Mine.

By the Author of all the Frank Reade Series.

CHAPTER I.

TREATING OF THE LOST MINE.

THE day was closing, and the somber shadows were falling on the plains of Montana one day in the month of September, as a young man mounted upon a fine, powerful-looking horse, drew rein in the midst of a wide expanse of table land.

All around, as far as the sight could reach, the seemingly unending plains stretched away until they blended afar with the glowing sky-line.

There was no evidence of the presence of man or beast to be discovered by the searching glances which the solitary horseman cast about him.

"Alone and lost!" he exclaimed in earnest and troubled tones.

The speaker was Frank Reade, Jr., the celebrated scientist and inventor, whose fame had long since spread all over the world, and whose name was a synonym of wonderful inventive genius.

Frank Reade was visiting at the ranch of an uncle, who was a prosperous Montana cattleman, and that morning the inventor had left his uncle's ranch well mounted, bent on a gallop over the prairie, and intoxicated by the bracing air, the balmy perfumes of the flowers, and the sight of game, he had given chase, and far away had the swift footed deer led him.

For some time the conviction had been stealing upon Frank that he could not find his way back to his uncle's ranch without a guide, but he had ridden on and on for hours, hoping, against hope, that he might yet discern some landmark which might serve to set him right.

At last Frank gave up the hope of finding the ranch that day. The prospect of passing the night alone upon the prairies caused him to constantly glance wistfully around upon the vast solitude, and almost as he uttered aloud the conviction that he was hopelessly astray, a human form suddenly started into sight.

Frank beheld at no great distance a man clad in the buckskin garb of the hunters and trappers of the far west.

The stranger, for such he was to Frank, had evidently been concealed in one of these abrupt depressions of the plains which frequently occur on the Montana table lands.

The man in buckskin was mounted upon a sturdy looking mustang, and he rode straight toward Frank Reade.

As he approached the young inventor had an opportunity to observe that the stranger was a grizzly old fellow, with a face tanned and hardened by exposure, and evidently one who had spent the greater part of his years in the wild West.

But the face of the old plainsman impressed Frank as being an honest one, and he was very glad of his coming.

"Hello, stranger! Day to ye. Pears like ye was a bit turned about, I reckon, ez I hev' been observin' your wanderin' course ever since ye came within the range o' sight," called out the old plainsman presently.

To this salutation Frank rejoined:

"Right. I am a stranger in these parts, and I acknowledge that I am lost. I am Frank Reade, Jr., and I wish to find my way back to my Uncle Abner Stanton's ranch, which I left this morning. Perhaps you can direct me aright."

"I reckon I kin. But you are full thirty miles away from Stanton's ranch, and that's too far for your tired horse to travel to-night, so you come along to my lodge. I'm Yank Beckbridge, Indian scout and prospector, and any one in Montana will tell ye that ye are safe in my company, I reckon."

Frank's face brightened at once as he heard the scout mention his name, for he remembered that his uncle had more than once spoken very favorably of "Yank" Beckbridge, saying that the old scout and prospector was a brave, true-hearted man, who was beloved by all the honest settlers of Montana, but who was feared and hated by the white outlaws and the hostile redskins.

Yank Beckbridge thrust forth his hand as he last spoke, and Frank Reade grasped it with a friendly pressure.

"I am very glad I have met you, and I will joyfully accept your hospitality for the night," said Frank, heartily.

"That's proper. Come, let's be movin', fer we hev' got some distance to go. Ye see that patch on the prairie over to the west. Looks like a cloud, but it's a timber 'island,' and that's where you'll find the domicile o' Yankton Beckbridge."

Thus speaking the plainsman began to urge his horse forward and Frank followed his lead.

"Did I understand ye to say, stranger, that yer name was Frank Reade, Jr.?" presently inquired old Yank.

"Certainly, sir; that's my name."

"You don't mean to tell me you are Frank Reade, the celebrated chap what gits up all sorts o' strange inventions ter run by steam an' 'lectricity an' who has gone travelin' all over creation and part of New Jersey as I've hern tell?"

"I plead guilty. I am the genuine original Frank Reade, Jr."

"Wall, dog my cats, pard, it does me proud ter meet ye. It does, by mighty."

"The pleasure is mutual."

Glad on it, I swow. But, say, I reckon ye hain't got none o' yer steam or 'lectric fixin's out here with ye, hev ye?"

"No; but I have just completed a new electric tally-ho, and the invention is a triumph in its way I think. It is at my home in Readestown."

"Ginger! I've 'lowed more than once ter lay off an' take a trip to Readestown ter see some o' yer wonders an' hev a talk with ye personally."

"I should be glad to see you at any time."

"Thank ye. I—hold on, there's a skrimmage agoin' on somewhere near here. Listen ter ther faint crack of weepings an' Injun yells."

Frank almost instantly caught the sounds which the old trapper had first heard.

He fancied that a fierce battle, in which a band of Indians were taking part, must be in progress in the timber for which he and his new companion were riding.

"Come on! We hev got to ride like the wind now. I'm desprit afeard that the reds are at my lodge, an' there's one there I wouldn't hev come to harm fer all the gold in Montana!" cried the scout.

In a moment he and Frank were riding furiously in the direction of the timber.

They reached the cover in a quarter of an hour. Meantime the sounds of conflict had ceased, and when the two horsemen rode into the timber, all was silence there.

But Yank Beckbridge discovered two Indian trails, showing where two large bands of Indians, wearing mocassins of different make, had entered the timber.

"Ginger! I reckon I understand what has been agoin' on. The Sioux and the Blackfeet are at war. War parties of the two nations hev' met near here, and they hev' had a powerful fight," said the scout, after examining the two trails.

His views were presently confirmed by further discovery. Emerging into a glade in the woods, Frank and his companion saw that they had reached the scene of an Indian battle.

The grass and shrubbery was trodden under foot, the branches of trees were shattered as by rifle balls, and there were a score of dead savages lying upon the ensanguined earth.

"Traps an' Trappers!" suddenly exclaimed Beckbridge. "If the Sioux haven't massacred every single one of old Getchewan's band of braves, Getchewan is an old Blackfoot chief—the oldest Indian in all ther northwest, it's said, and his chosen band was the last of the original race of Montana Indjuns, though there are plenty of other branches of the Blackfoot tribe."

"Do you mean to state that the band of Indians who have been massacred here are the so-called 'Gold Mine Indians of Montana?'" asked Frank with a sudden augmentation of interest.

"Yes," assented the scout.

"My uncle has told me of these Indians. He has assured me that for years the white settlers of Montana have believed in the existence of a lost gold mine in this territory, which was originally discovered, and worked by Spanish adventurers from Colorado, who were here a hundred years ago, as ancient coins of Spain, with the dates on them intact, which have been unearthed in the territory, goes to prove. The Spaniards have left traces of their occupancy of the country in early days in the nomenclature of the territorial towns," said Frank.

"I reckon like enough yer uncle told ye too that, recently, the opinion hez gained ground thet ther band o' old Chief Getchewan has discovered the lost gold mine o' the ancient Spaniards?" asked Yank Beckbridge.

"Yes," assented Frank.

"Yer see, ther fact is, for some time old Getchewan and his men have been bringin' gold ore of mighty pure quality inter the tradin' posts, an' they have also traded off a few Spanish coins of ancient date and rusted with age, as well as a number of old Spanish minin' implements an' vessels. The traders gave Getchewan's band the name o' the Gold Mine Injuns."

"So I have heard," replied Frank.

Just then there came a deep groan. The sound of suffering emanated from a clump of bushes near by, and Frank and the scout dismounted, secured their animals, and then advanced into the thicket, prompted by motives of humanity to render as-

assistance to any wounded human creature whom they might there discover.

In the thicket, where he had crawled away to secrete himself from his merciless foemen, the inventor and his scout comrade found an aged Indian.

The snow of many winters whitened his hair, and the chief's head-dress upon his white locks proclaimed he was a head chief of the Blackfeet of Montana.

"Getchewan!" exclaimed old Yank, the scout, as he saw the face of the aged Indian.

"Dead Shot is right. He sees Getchewan, and the chief is dying. Every one of my braves have been slain by the Sioux dogs who outnumbered us five to one," said the old chief, faintly, as he panted for breath and made a long pause between each word.

"Dead Shot and Getchewan were always friends, and the white hunter's heart is sad," replied Yank, and he drew forth a pocket flask and held it to the chief's lips.

The latter drank and then murmured:

"The Sioux sought the secret of Getchewan. They meant to steal away the discovery he made a year ago, and which he meant should yet make him and his tribe as rich as the white man's richest men. But Getchewan has his secret safe yet, and now, since all his men are dead, Getchewan is the only man in all the world, save one white man, who is in the mine and cannot leave it, who knows where the lost mine of the white men of the south, with pointed beards, is."*

"Getchewan meant that the secret of the lost gold mine should die with him, but now that he hears the voice of the great Manito calling him, and he knows that he must soon go to the happy hunting-grounds, the chief's mind is changed. Dead Shot has always been a friend to the chief, and it is better that he should have the secret of the lost gold mine than that it should die with Getchewan."

The dying chief paused for a moment and then went on, while his voice rapidly became fainter and almost inaudible.

But Yank and Frank Reade knelt close beside the cliff, and heard him as he said:

"In the buckskin bag of gold about my neck is an Indian sign-writing, or tracing, which is like the maps of the white men to the red man. It will guide you, if you can read it aright, and you shall find the lost mine."

The strength of the dying chief failed utterly for the instant, and Frank and Yank Beckbridge thought that his end had come.

But presently he drew a faint breath, and murmured:

"Yonder, where the mighty hills are, where foot of white man never pressed the earth—yonder is the gold mine!"

As he spoke, with one last effort the chief pointed to the northwest, then he sank back heavily and the old scout to whom he had bequeathed his gold secret as an inheritance, knew that he was dead.

With reverent hands they gently removed a buckskin bag from about his neck, and opened it. The bag contained several nuggets of virgin gold, and a folded piece of white buckskin.

This Yank unfolded, and he and Frank scanned it with eager interest. The singular map was drawn in the strange hieroglyphics of the Indian sign-language.

"I think I kin study it all over kerrect, but it will take time, and maybe it won't do us no good no how, fer in the far northwest, where we must go to find the lost mine, the bloodthirsty Sioux guards every trail and pass, and no white man has ever yet returned from ther kentry alive," said Beckbridge.

"Indeed," said Frank.

"Yes. But hold on a bit. You told me ye had just finished one o' yer inventions ter travel with by electricity, which I take it are suthin' fast."

"I have, as I said, a new electric tally-ho all ready for a journey," replied Frank.

CHAPTER II.

FRANK READE, JR., AND THE OLD SCOUT FORM A PARTNERSHIP.

"I RECKON with yer 'lectric vehicle you could go most anywhere, now couldn't ye? Injuns an' white outlaws an' sich wouldn't trouble ye I co-sate. Am I right?" said Yank Beckbridge, after a pause.

"You are. Under ordinary circumstances I should have no fear to venture with my new electric tally-ho wherever the vehicle can be run."

"Werry good, I've got an idee. Suppose you an' me jine hands as pardners. You furnish ther tally-ho an' I'll put in the map Getchewan gave me, an' we'll make a search fer the lost mine an' share an' share alike if we find it. What do ye say?"

"All right. I want to make a journey with my new tally-ho in the West, and I am not averse to combining profit with pleasure."

"Then it's a bargain 'tween us?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll tell ye right now it's not so much ther love o' gold that sets me on ther trail o' ther lost mine as it are friendship. But hello! Here's my leetle Sunshine an' so mum are the word afore her. I'll 'splain my meanin' later, pard."

Just then, among the trees, a little golden-haired girl of perhaps eight years, came into view, and with a joyful exclamation the fairy-like little creature ran forward, and sprang into the rough old trapper's arms.

It was a pleasant sight to see the rough, weather-beaten face of the old plainsman soften as he caressed the golden head that was pillowed upon his breast, while he said gently.

"So yer all safe an' sound yet, Sunshine, eh? The reds didn't find out our little lodge in the hollow though they were so near, I take it?"

"No, Papa Yank, but the Indians made me afraid, I could hear them so plainly. Oh, I am so glad you have come, for I know the Indians dare not come where you are."

"Ha! ha! ha! You've got great faith in old 'Pop Yank,' hain't ye now, leetle Sunshine? I s'pose yer think all I hev ter do are to wink ter scatter a hull army o' ther pizen reds."

"I am sure of it, Papa Yank," replied the little one with complete assurance, opening her big blue eyes very wide.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Yank, heartily.

"But, Papa Yank, have you brought me any news of my own papa?" asked the child, eagerly.

"Allers that question," murmured Yank, aside.

"No, not yet, leetle Sunshine. But I'll bring yer news o' me old pard, Owen Strathmore, yer papa, one o' these days, or ye won't see old Yank's gray head no more," replied the scout, aloud.

"Don't say that, Papa Yank. I should die if I didn't have you."

Yank felt the kiss of the child on his bronzed brow, and a memory of the past was evoked that brought tears to his eyes. But he turned his head for a moment, and his emotion had passed when he said:

"This 'ere is my new pard, Sunshine. Now we'll go to the lodge."

Yank went forward, after the little one had acknowledged her introduction to Frank Reade, in a childish way.

The trapper led the little one by the hand.

Frank Reade followed them, with the bridles of the horses over his arm. In a hollow, not far distant, embowered by the surrounding trees, which concealed it, was a rude Indian lodge. This was Yank's summer home. Having cared for their animals and partaken of food, when little Sunshine had fallen asleep Yank resumed the thread of his conversation which the appearance of the little girl on the Indian battle-field had interrupted.

"I said it wan't so much the love of gold as it was friendship that set me on the trail o' ther lost gold mine. Now, I'll tell ye what I meant," the scout said.

"I am interested to understand your precise meaning."

"Well, ther fact are this. The father o' little Sunshine was my old pard. His name I've mentioned to ye. It are Owen Strathmore. Owen longed fer gold. Gold was his great failin', and he sot out, secret like when I was away, ter track up old Getchewan, hopin' I s'pose, to find the lost mine that away. Owen never came back, to this day."

"Ah, I begin to anticipate your explanation."

"Like enough, pard. Ye heard Getchewan say there was 'a white man in ther lost gold mine who could not leave it?'"

"Yes."

"Can ye guess, then, who I suspect ther white man in ther lost gold mine is?"

"Your pard, little Sunshine's father—Owen Strathmore."

"Kerrect! I reckon the gold mine Injuns discovered Owen on the trail o' old Getchewan, and that they captured the poor feller an' shut him up in the lost gold mine."

"Such a conclusion seems to me to be very probable," assented the young inventor.

"So ye see, if I kin find the lost mine, 'tain't gold alone I s'pect ter find, but me old pard, as I have pledged me word ter little Sunshine I would yet bring him back ter her, if he was in the land o' ther livin'."

"You are a true heart, and such a friend as I am proud to have."

"I've always tried to be white. But now that I've 'splain'd the pints of affairs to ye, let's arrange our plans."

"Very well. I propose that I return to Readestown, and immediately ship my electric tally-ho to Helena, Montana, by rail—that you join me

there, and that we start on our search for the lost mine from that point, and without needless delay."

"Kerrect! That's bizness, an' it jist suits my idee. I'll leave little Sunshine in the care o' a kind family I know in Helena while I am off on the search."

"Very well. We will consider it all arranged."

"Yes. But ther's one thing more, I reckon I ought ter tell ye, though it's a sort o' a secret 'tween Owen an' me. Ther fact is, ther was a mighty powerful reason why Owen wanted gold so desprit like. He never explained it all out quite plain an' clear, but he did tell me that ther fate o' leetle Sunshine, her future happiness, an' it might be her very life depended on his gettin' together a large sum o' money within one year's time from last spring."

"Then there is some mystery about your old pard and his child," said Frank.

"Yes," assented Yank. "I questioned Owen but he put me off, saying he would tell me all some day."

It was late in the night when Frank and old Yank Beckbridge the scout ceased talking. But finally the conversation was brought to a close and they slept.

When morning dawned, taking little Sunshine on the saddle before him, Yank set out to guide Frank Reade to his uncle's ranch.

In due time they arrived at their destination, and Frank was warmly welcomed.

The very next day Yank Beckbridge set out for Helena taking little Sunshine with him, and Frank Reade rode to the nearest station of the stage line running between his uncle's ranch and Virginia City and secured passage eastward.

At the posting station while awaiting the stage Frank was considerably surprised to hear that there were rumors that one Indian Ralph, a reckless road-agent chief, who, with his band, had long been the terror of the Southern Montana trails, had come north, and had been seen near the road to Virginia City.

Upon the arrival of the eastern-bound stage the driver was informed of the news, but he scoffed at it as did his passengers.

Frank boarded the stage very much reassured, although he was not a bit of a coward, for he had a large sum of money on his person which he was conveying east for his uncle.

A thrilling adventure was in store for Frank.

About twelve miles south of Virginia City in a hilly pass the stage coach was suddenly halted by a score of road agents at whose head rode a white man in full Indian war dress, save that instead of paint a black mask concealed his face.

"Indian Ralph and his men!" yelled the terrified Jehu, recognizing the dreaded road-agent whom he had seen before.

Frank Reade had his revolver out in a moment, and he shouted to the frightened passengers:

"Fire on the rascals. There are a dozen of us. We can beat off the robbers if we will."

As Frank thus shouted he discharged his revolver through the window of the coach at Indian Ralph.

The bullet shattered the road-agent's right ear and sent him reeling in his saddle back among his men, while he uttered cries of rage and pain.

But the succeeding moment the road-agents charged upon the coach in a body, discharging a fusillade of bullets from their weapons.

It seemed that the coach-load of passengers who had dared to offer resistance to the robbers would be slaughtered without mercy. But all at once there came the clatter of horses' hoofs down the trail, and with a ringing cheer a company of United States cavalry dashed up around a bend in the trail.

"Hurrah for Frank Reade who winged the road-agent chief and encouraged us to show fight!" cried an enthusiastic passenger, as the road-robbers fled before the cavalrymen.

"So Frank Reade is the name of the man that has marked me for life! I saw his face when he fired and I'll know him again, and I'll have my vengeance some day!" yelled the road agent chief fiercely as he dashed away.

The soldiers pursued the robbers and the stage went on.

Frank made the remainder of his journey back to his native place without meeting with further adventure, and he thought but little of the threat of the road agent chief.

The very day of his arrival in Readestown Frank received a call from his old friend Dr. Vaneyke.

The old traveler and explorer was looking hale and hearty, and he did not seem to have aged much since he made his last great journey with Frank through Central Asia.

Presently the doctor asked:

"Have you decided yet where you will go with your new electric tally-ho?"

"Yes," replied Frank. "You knew my wife objects to continuing my travels as they keep me

* Thus the Indians designated the early Spanish settlers.

CHAPTER III.

"A BIT AV A RUCTION"—FIRE!—ON THE WESTERN PLAINS.

away from home so much, but she has consented to my taking a journey provided I don't go out of the United States."

"Well, what part of our country do you propose to visit?"

"The far west."

"Good! If you want a companion I can find you one without looking far."

"Bravo, doctor! You mean you will go yourself?"

"Certainly, Frank, my boy."

"Once a man has tasted the fascination of travel you can't keep him at home long, eh, doctor?"

"No; at least that is my case."

"Well, doctor, I think our western journey is likely to be a great trip, for I have a motive in view in making it that is really quite remarkable. I am going to tell you the whole story."

"I am all attention."

The doctor then listened with wrapt interest while Frank went on to relate the story of the lost gold mine and how he had come to agree to go in search of it.

While Frank was talking, Mrs. Frank, Jr., and Frank's father came into the drawing-room, and then Frank went over the whole story of the lost gold mine again.

"What did you say the name of the partner of Beckbridge, whom you suspect to be a prisoner in the lost mine, is?" asked Mr. Reade, Sr., who was now a trifle hard of hearing.

"Owen Strathmore," replied Frank.

"Ah, I thought so. I knew Owen Strathmore and his wife years ago. Owen was a poor young man, but honest and true, and he loved rich Squire Baldwin's only daughter, Bessie. The squire refused his consent, and Owen and Bessie eloped, and then the old squire vowed he would disown his daughter. Owen and his bride went west, and I never heard of them again. Owen was my friend, and I hope, Frank, you will do all you can to save him, and find the lost mine," said Mr. Reade.

"I certainly shall," assented Frank.

There was some further conversation, and then the doctor said:

"I think I will go out to your work-shop in the rear of the grounds, Frank, and have another look at the tally-ho. I haven't seen it since you put the last finishing touches on it."

"Very well, I will join you at the work-shop in a few moments, as soon as I find some washers I have somewhere in this desk. You will find Barney and Pomp at the work-shop now," said Frank, turning to a desk as he spoke.

The doctor passed out of the house, and Frank's wife said to her husband:

"Oh, by the way, Frank, I should have told you that I took pity on a poor unfortunate man who was a soldier in the late war, and allowed him to sleep in the work-shop last evening. I believe he has not gone away yet."

"Very well. You are always kind to the poor, my dear, and I am glad to have you so," Frank replied pleasantly.

Meanwhile the doctor proceeded to the work-shop.

The great double doors, through which any of the Reades' wonderful steam or electric inventions could pass, stood wide open, for the day was quite warm.

There, within the shop, the doctor saw the new electric tally-ho, and a beauty it was, as well as a triumph of the inventor's skill.

The tally-ho was provided with the usual double seat forward and two others further back. The vehicle was modeled after the celebrated English tally-ho, which has so long been a favorite vehicle in the land of Queen "Vic."

No pains or expense had been spared in making the exterior beautiful. The entire vehicle had been artistically painted in bright harmonious colors, and varnished until it shone like glass when the sunbeams fell upon it.

The wheels, as in all the Reades' electrical and steam vehicles, were provided with broad tires, so they could not easily sink in soft soil. In the main body of the coach, under the floor between the front and rear wheels, was the storage locker for all the supplies necessary for a long journey.

Just above the rear axle was a water tank, lined with porcelain, which would hold a large quantity of water.

In the roof of the tally-ho was a sliding panel, and by pulling a lever this panel could be shot aside in a second, thus opening a way of retreat into the interior of the coach of which the travelers could avail themselves at any time.

The entire surface of the tally-ho was plated over with sheets of tempered steel, which were impervious to any rifle ball.

"It is indeed a thing of beauty and wonderful utility," said the good doctor to himself, as he observed the last of Frank Reade, Jr.'s splendid inventions.

The windows of the tally-ho were provided with metallic blinds, which could be closed at all times, and there were small adjustable openings on all sides for loop-holes, through which the inmates of the vehicle could discharge their weapons.

These loop-holes also served as ventilating openings, allowing air to circulate readily through the tally-ho when it was all closed up.

By means of intricate mechanism connecting the powerful double electric batteries which supplied the motive power with the four splendid metallic steeds that were attached to the tally-ho by means of a steel and wire harness, the driver could control and guide the iron horses as well from the inside of the vehicle as when perched on the elevated driver's seat.

As in a previous invention, the electric batteries were stored in a special compartment under the driver's seat, in the inside of a vehicle, and they were out of sight, but the opening of a small door in the "battery room" would enable the engineer to reach the wonderful motors.

Above the battery-room was a mahogany board, from which protruded a number of brass keys, each numbered or lettered.

This was the engineer's post when inside.

By applying pressure to the brass keys on the board he could, at will, start, stop, back, or turn the electric team.

Wires, running from these keys to a corresponding set of knobs in a rack on the top of the vehicle, were to be used when the engineer or driver was outside.

There were two electric lamps on the front of the tally-ho, which, by night, afforded an excellent light.

An electric gong of silver, with a clear resonant tone, was suspended in a frame behind the front seat.

The horses were wonders of mechanism. They were perfect equines modeled in metal as by the skill of a sculptor. All the joints were made to correspond with those of living horses, and the intricate machinery with which the limbs of the horses were united was stored in their hollow bodies. Wires connected the internal machinery of the horses directly with the batteries.

The hoofs of the iron steeds were shod with claws that gave them a firm hold on the earth and prevented their slipping.

There were electric lights in the hollow heads of the leaders, and from the glass eyes the bright electric flame from the lamps within would be brilliantly reflected by night.

The reins were ribbons of fine steel—the harness was the same—and everything was complete, as though the iron horses were living animals.

Having completed his admiring survey of the electric tally-ho the doctor turned away. He was about to retrace his steps to the house, as Frank Reade's appearance was delayed. But the doctor had not taken many steps when he heard the voices of Barney O'Shea and Pomp the faithful dandy. The two old servants of the Reades, who had been all over the world with Frank Jr. and his father, came to the door of the work-shop, and at the same time a miserable, ragged, tramp-like personage issued out of the building and seated himself lazily in the bright sunlight.

The individual was the man who had been allowed to sleep in the workshop. Certainly his appearance seemed to indicate that he might have imposed upon Mrs. Reade, and that the story he had told her might be false.

Barney and Pomp were the same jolly, reckless characters as of old, always playing jokes on each other and fighting between themselves, and yet at heart the best of friends, and each was ready at any time to risk his life in defense of the other.

The doctor spoke to Barney and Pomp cheerfully, and then, with a suspicious glance at the tramp, he passed on to the house.

"Be dad, Pomp, will yez have the illigant politeness to hand me over me flask, I dunno?" said Barney, as the doctor passed out of hearing.

"Gollie, I neber seed sich a feller as you am, Barney. I done tole yer dat I hain't seed nuffin' of yer flask," replied Pomp.

"Be the tail av Widdy Nolan's goat that rached untill oold Ireland an' rung St. Patrick's bell it's not meself, Barney O'Shea, as kin be deceived by a naygur."

"Look yere, Irish. You done call me a liar, doan' yer?"

"Sure an' Oi didn't say yez was a loyer. But begob, yez are a loyer. Me flask was in the pocket av me overalls whin I wint til me breakfast; and

now, it's the loikes av yez as kin tell where it's gone to."

"Look yere, Barney. I see you done want ter pick up trouble. I see a colored geman, I is, an' I doan' low no Irish trash to suit my honah, sah."

"Fat's that the nagur says? Sure an' it's a peaceful mon Oi am, but begob, it's not an Irishman as will lave a nagur stand foreninst him an' ax for a foight in vain. Bedad, an' it's breakin' the head av the nagur Oi'll be afther doin'."

"Go way from me! Go way from me, Irish! I see a bad man when I done got started. Doan' yer play with me, Irish!"

Pomp began to duck his head about as though he meditated trying his favorite tactics, and butting Barney out of time.

"Arrah, it's a ruction yez want! Sure an' the same Oi'll be afther givin' yez. I'll bate the head av yez. Shade o' Donnybrook! It's not a nagur as kin stand before an Irish gintleman. Long life til the loikes av me!" roared Barney.

It had been more than a week since Barney and Pomp had engaged in a row, and the rellicking Irishman was just spoiling for a ruction.

Barney threw off his coat and began to dance around Pomp.

The grimy face of the tramp meanwhile opened in a wide grin that parted his physiognomy in the middle, from ear to ear, and he rubbed his capacious stomach with an expression of ineffable satisfaction.

A moment and Barney thought he saw his chance.

"Whoop! Show me the man as dare tread on the tail av me coat!" he cried, and rushed at Pomp full tilt.

But Pomp leaped aside.

Then, before Barney could evade him, the dandy ducked his head and shot forward, and the Irishman went down.

Pomp walked back into the work-shop with a swaggering gait and with his hat tilted over one eye.

Barney picked himself up and scratched his head. Then for a wonder he stood perfectly quiet for several moments; at last, however, he muttered:

"Begob, it's cogitatin' I've been. Now sure an' Pomp's wife is agoing to give a big dinner til a company of nagur friends from the town the day. I know the nagur haz been countin' on gettin' a square male, an' begob Oi'll get aven wid the spalpeen be kapin him away from the dinner. It's almost noon now sure, so Oi'll begin me tactics."

With this Barney walked into the shop.

Pomp was now at work at a bench in the rear, and Barney began to polish the brasswork on the electric tally-ho. But slyly he slipped a wedge of steel into the fastening of one of the side doors of the tally-ho, and also secured the panel on the top of the vehicle.

"Now, thin, me trap is ready, begob. Let me see if I kin cotch the nagur, bad seran til the cast-iron head av him," said Barney, mentally, and then he called out:

"Come here forninst the tally-ho for a minute, Pomp."

Pomp came promptly.

"What yer want, Irish?" he asked.

"Will yez have the illigant politeness to go inside av the tally-ho wance an' look an' see what is wrong with the springs av the door wance whilst I open and shut the same. Sure an' I can't make out why it won't work at all at all."

Barney spoke in a very pleasant and conciliating tone, and Pomp promptly stepped inside the tally-ho. Then Barney closed the door and slipped another wedge, which he held in his hand, in the fastener, thus securing it and making poor Pomp a prisoner.

"Ha! Ha! Ha! I guess you'll be afther missin' yer dinner this day, be gob, me foine laddy buck, an' that's what yez git fur yer hatten way av foightin' wid yer head, 'stead av standin' up like a mon wid yer fists, be gob," cried Barney, exultantly.

Then Pomp found out he was locked up in the tally-ho.

"Luff me out, Irish! Luff me out! Dar's roast goose an' biled possum waitin' fur me, an' I can't done stay yere an' miss dem game-birds!"

"Be gob, an' yez'll not get out untill yez tell me what yez have done wid me flask!" replied Barney. Then Pomp was mad, and straightway a terrible racket began inside the tally-ho.

"Kick away, naygur, batter yer cannon-ball head, bust yer biler, you're there to stay!" cried Barney.

But just then Mr. Reade, Sr., appeared in the door of the work-house, and he took in the situation at a glance.

"What do you mean, you rascal, by shutting Pomp up in the tally-ho? Release him at once!" said Mr. Reade, Sr., sternly.

Very reluctantly Barney obeyed.

The instant the door of the tally-ho was opened Pomp sprang out upon Barney and a rough and tumble fight began between them. Over and over they rolled. New Pomp was on top and then Barney.

While Barney chanced to be uppermost, Mrs. Pomp, who had come to call her husband to dinner, appeared upon the scene. At once the wench fell upon Barney tooth and nail.

It seemed everything was arranged for a general riot through the combination of circumstances, for while Mrs. Pomp was belaboring Barney, Mrs. Barney came to the rear door of the Reade mansion, and witnessed the difficulty.

"Sure, an' the nagurs are afther murderin' poor Barney! Arrah, but I'll break the head of the wench, so I will!" screamed the irate Irishwoman, and she made a rush for the battle-field and fell upon Mrs. Pomp furiously.

Old Mr. Reade vainly ordered the belligerent couples to desist. They did not heed him, and probably he was not heard.

"Ould Ireland forever! Sure, an' it's reinforcements I have! We'll clane out the nagurs! Bate the head av the wench, Biddy!" roared Barney.

But before the fight resulted seriously, Frank Reade, Jr. and Dr. Vaneyke came hastening from the house, and the young inventor quickly pulled the contestants apart.

"No more of this, or I'll discharge you all on the spot," said Frank, Jr., as the two couples stood glaring at each other.

Barney stepped back carelessly against a wire which was connected with one of the electric batteries in the work-shop as Frank spoke.

Frank had been making an experiment, and left the wire thus.

As Barney struck the wire he received a terrible shock.

"Worra! worra! it's kilt Oi am intirely!" he roared as he went backward with a sudden jump that landed him against the tramp, who had now changed his position.

There was a laugh at Barney's mishap. But the succeeding instant all were very much astounded to see Barney deal the tramp a blow on the ear that sent him reeling.

"It's mesel' as knows who stole me flask now. I smell the breath av the scare-crow!" roared Barney.

"Golly! luff me butt him jiss once!" shouted Pomp.

Barney and the darky were rushing at the tramp in an instant. His escape was cut off, and, as a last resort, the tattered vagrant sprang inside the tally-ho.

It seemed it would fare hardly with the tramp now, for Barney and Pomp meant to drag him out of the electric vehicle at once and soundly pummel him.

But Frank, Jr., interposed before Barney and Pomp reached the coach.

"Be off to your dinner, all of you. I will attend to the tramp," he said.

Very reluctantly Barney and Pomp withdrew with their wives, and now that the mystery of the missing flask was cleared up, and Pomp was exculpated, all four were soon on the best of terms again.

Frank waited until Barney and Pomp were out of sight, and then he was about to order the tramp to come out of the tally-ho, when all at once the electric vehicle made a forward start.

Through the open door it came as Frank and his companions leaped aside, and on, as though drawn by four living horses, continued the wonderful vehicle.

It will be remembered that the batteries were all charged, and that the vehicle was ready to start at an instant's notice. In this invention Frank had simplified some of the machinery, so that the tally-ho could be started by simply pulling one lever. Now Frank understood that the tramp must have, by chance, while meddling with the interior arrangements of the coach, pulled the starting lever.

From the course it was taking the tally-ho would in a moment or so come in collision with a large tree it seemed, and knowing that if this accident occurred, great damage would be done, Frank leaped in pursuit of the tally-ho. He reached the boot at the rear, and quickly swung himself upon the top of the vehicle, gained the driver's seat, and seized the lever there, and reversed it, thus bringing the vehicle to a quick stop before it reached the tree.

Frank alighted, and the tramp, who was now half-intoxicated by the stolen liquor he had drank, staggered out of the tally-ho.

"Be off with you, you rascal, and never show your face around here again," said Frank to the tramp sternly, for he was now well satisfied that he was unworthy of charity.

"Maybe you think you kin drive me, young feller? I'm tough, I be, an' I might hit yer onct on the smeller, if ye gimme any back talk," said the tramp, blustering up to Frank.

This was too much. Frank caught him by the collar and ran him to the road gate, and there he gave him a kick to help him on his way.

The vagrant slunk away, but he muttered in an ugly tone:

"You can't kick Tough Jack fer nothin', young feller, an' you'll find it out afore long, cuss ye."

But Frank returned to the tally-ho, and ran it back into the work-shop.

"Of course you understand, Frank," said Mr. Reade, Sr., "when we allowed the tramp to sleep in the work-shop he did not have access to the tally-ho. He slept in the entry, and the door leading to the main room and the tally-ho was carefully secured. Trust me to see that no stranger was given an opportunity to meddle with your great invention."

There was some conversation about the merits of the tally-ho, and then Pomp and Barney came back from dinner, and Frank told them about his proposed trip to the far West. The Irishman and the darky were delighted, and Barney said:

"Sure it's a happy mon I am in the thought that Oi may soon be afther havin' a bit av a ruction wid the red nagurs on the plains."

Frank and Dr. Vaneyke returned to the house accompanied by Mr. Reade presently, and, having discussed their plans further, they finally separated for the night, and Frank, Jr., retired early.

Soon the whole Reade household slept. But suddenly Frank, Jr., was awakened by the thrilling cry:

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

The inventor hurried on a few garments, and, rushing to the window of his sleeping-room, which commanded a view of the work-shop, he saw that the building was in flames. The alarm had been given by a belated wayfarer who chanced to pass the Reade mansion on his way to the town.

Frank realized at once that there was not an instant to be lost or his new invention would be destroyed. He dashed from the house and rushed to the shop. At the same time Pomp and Barney came running from their dwellings.

Frank managed to force open the door of the work-shop in a moment. But a torrent of black suffocating smoke rolled forth and hurled him back for an instant. Then, thinking only of saving the tally-ho and heedless of the great danger, Frank plunged into the smoky cavern and vanished.

"Sure, an' the poor laddy is gone to the death av him!" cried Barney, as he and Pomp recoiled at the work-shop door, driven back by the smoke and flames.

Mrs. Frank, Jr., and old Mr. Reade had hastened from the house after Frank, and they now came up. They had seen the brave one they loved vanish amid the smoke and flames, and Mrs. Reade now cried frantically:

"Oh, Barney—Pomp, save my husband—save him, I beg of you!"

There was a moment of awful suspense as Pomp and Barney, brave as they were, hesitated about venturing into the abyss of flame and smoke. But all at once Barney uttered a yell. He had caught the sound of wheels.

The succeeding instant out of the burning work-shop came the electric tally-ho and team. Then the door of the vehicle opened as the tally-ho came to a standstill at a safe distance, and out of the vehicle leaped Frank Reade, Jr., safe and unharmed.

There was a shout of delight, and Mrs. Reade, almost fainting with joy, sank into Frank's arms.

The work-shop was doomed. The fire company from Readstown presently arrived, but they came too late. Meanwhile, Frank assured himself that the tally-ho had sustained no injury. As to the origin of the fire all were inclined to think it was the work of the revengeful tramp.

Next day the tally-ho and the metallic steeds were taken apart and carefully packed in cases made for the purpose. The day after all the cases were shipped by rail for Helena, Montana.

Frank, Dr. Vaneyke, Barney and Pomp followed by the first passenger train. The journey to Helena was accomplished in safety, and when the party arrived there Frank found old Yank Beckbridge, the scout and prospector, awaiting him.

The plainsman had provided a pleasant home for Little Sunshine in the family of a friend as he had designed.

As soon as possible after the arrival of the tally-ho it was put together and laden with necessary supplies, ammunition, arms and scientific appliances, which had been shipped from Readstown. One moonlight night the party boarded the tally-ho and unknown to the general public began the great search for the lost gold mine.

The second day of the journey was drawing to a close when the party on the tally-ho observed a red reflection on the sky ahead.

Then passing over a ridge on the vast plains which they were now traversing, they beheld at no great distance, near a small clump of timber or

"prairie island," a settler's cabin in flames, and about it were a score of yelling savages.

"Forward to the rescue!" cried Frank Reade in ringing tones, as he turned on the full force of the electric battery and sent the tally-ho toward the burning cabin very swiftly.

All hands took their places inside the vehicle, and with their rifles thrust through the loopholes, were in readiness to discharge a volley.

But suddenly out of the timber beside the cabin dashed full half a hundred mounted Sioux, and on they came at the tally-ho yelling like demons and flogging their ponies at full speed. In a moment the Sioux were circling around the tally-ho and closing in. It was evident as yet they took the vehicle for an ordinary coach and felt sure of its capture.

CHAPTER IV.

ASTONISHED REDSKINS.

THE sudden appearance of the half hundred Sioux warriors who came dashing out of the timber near the lone settler's cabin was a surprise to Frank Reade and his companions, of course.

When the young inventor started the electric tally-ho forward in a charge to the rescue of the imperiled occupants of the cabin, he supposed he had to encounter but the score of redskins who were engaged in the attack on the cabin.

But the sight of the additional force which so suddenly revealed its presence did not materially alter Frank's plans.

Still he was intent upon rendering assistance to the settler's family.

Above the saturnalia of the Indians there reached a clear female voice ringing out a despairing cry of:

"Help! Help! Help!"

Thus it was known that within that burning cabin, environed by fierce and merciless enemies, a helpless woman was menaced.

A moment fraught with supreme excitement for all within the electric tally-ho elapsed while nearer and nearer circled the howling Sioux at the full speed of their wild mustangs.

They were only to be likened to a human maelstrom, whirling nearer and nearer, like the deadly whirlpool, toward the center which was Frank Reade's electric tally-ho.

Suddenly the voice of the woman in the burning cabin rang out again.

"Save my child! Oh, save my little one!" she uttered.

It was a frantic, despairing appeal wrung from a mother's heart by awful dread.

Frank's sympathy was awakened, and all his chivalrous impulses were up in arms upon the instant.

He thought of his own wife and a little son whom Heaven had sent to gladden his heart.

"We must reach the cabin! We must and will save the poor woman and her innocent child!" uttered Frank, with intense intonation.

"Right, by powder! You kin skulp old Yank Beckbridge an' feed him out for wolf bait, ter pizen ther critters, ef he ain't with ye on this leetle fambly picnic excursion clean up to ter the gills!" exclaimed the old trapper characteristically.

"Whoop! Erin-go-Bragh, an' the Seventeenth av Ould Ireland! It's a ruction the red nagurs are after, bad seran til the loikes av thim, an' sure it's mesel' as will bate the heads of the murderin' blackguards!" Barney roared very belligerently.

"Put her dar. You done bet your life, Barney, dar am a heap o' iron in dis child's blood. Iron am what gibs the colored folks de fine brunette complexion. 'Cordin' ter Dr. Balls, de iron in de blood makes de fightin' man, an' I's gwine fo' to waste some ob dat iron on dem low down red niggers!" cried Pomp, grasping Barney's hand enthusiastically.

"Listen til the nonsense av the nagur. Faith, an' it's not iron in the blood that makes a nagur," said Barney, jeeringly.

"You'se might smart—in yer mind. Spec's den you kin tote what do make de color of de African gentleman?"

"Begob, an' I kin do that same, sure."

"Den s'pose yer turn on yer wisdom onct."

"Be the powers, an' it's dirt, an' dirty dirt at that, be me soul, that makes a nagur's color."

"Barney, I done hate ter disagree wid yer or hurt yer feelin's, but I must mention dat you am de biggest liar on two legs."

"That manes foight ivory toime in Paddy's land!"

"I'se got de buttin' cramp comin' inter me neck. I done spec's I'se got ter butt some one ter cure 'em."

"Sure an' it's mesel' is the docthur to cure the loikes av yez. It's manners I'll be afther baten intil yez. Come on, yez image yez!" roared Barney.

Despite the great danger from the Indians whom they were soon to be called upon to contend with

for their lives, the two ridiculous fellows seemed determined on what Barney would affectionately term "a bit av a shindy."

Meanwhile the electric tally-ho had sped onward toward the settler's cabin.

"Crack, crack, crack!" came the sharp report of the Sioux' discharged guns as they surged about the swiftly moving coach.

The din of the fusillade had for the moment occupied all of Frank Reade's attention. But now Dr. Vaneyke touched the young inventor on the arm.

Frank turned quickly, and asked:

"What is it, doctor?"

"Barney and Pomp are at it again!" replied the good doctor, indicating the absurd pair of chronic quarrelers.

Barney had got his coat off, and he had discarded his gun for his favorite shillalah, and he was brandishing the stick as if about to attack Pomp.

That sable gentleman had his head lowered, and he was evidently all ready to meet Barney's threatened attack half way.

"Hold there, or I'll fling you both out of the coach, you rascals!" cried Frank, stamping his foot.

At that moment there was the sound of a heavy fall on the roof of the tally-ho.

Yank Beckbridge, who was looking out of one of the loop-holes, sprang back with an ejaculation.

"Injun on the coach, by mighty!"

"Thin, begob, he's my meat!" roared Barney, and as quick as thought he touched the electric spring which held the sliding door in the top of the tally-ho in place.

Like a flash the door slid back, and "thump!" down into the vehicle a huge Sioux warrior was precipitated.

Barney and Pomp fell upon the astounded redskin. He had gained the side of the tally-ho, mounted on his mustang, and one bound from the back of his pony, had enabled the agile fellow to reach the top of the vehicle.

"Bind him securely, Barney," said Frank Reade, as the Irishman and the darky held the Sioux motionless.

Frank was promptly obeyed.

Then all hands sprang to the loopholes and sent a volley of bullets among the Indians.

Meanwhile the cunning redskins had sought to stop the coach by shooting down the metal horses.

Volley after volley of bullets had been discharged at the team of the tally-ho in rapid succession.

The Indians saw the bullets strike the horses, and they heard the sharp "ping" of metallic contact.

But although they discharged bullets enough with which to stay a dozen such teams as that attached to the tally-ho, had they been real living horses, Frank Reade's equine wonders continued on, of course, as though the hostile bullets of the Indians were so many snowflakes.

The superstitious Indians were amazed and alarmed. To them the strange vehicle and its four steeds assumed supernatural attributes.

The oldest warriors drew off and shook their heads as they muttered:

"Great medicine! Great medicine!"

In a moment more the burning cabin would be reached.

Frank saw the necessity of immediately dispersing the enemy.

He accordingly gave Pomp some instructions, and the darky made haste to get out some hand-grenades.

The door in the top of the tally-ho was then opened again and a shower of the explosive grenades were hurled among the enemy.

This strange volley completed the rout and consternation of the redskins. The party from the woods wheeled their ponies and galloped madly away.

"Great Medicine, shoot thunder and lightning balls!" they yelled.

Now the score of Indians on foot about the burning cabin were preparing to rush against it with a log. They meant to use the log as a battering-ram, and beat down the door.

But Frank Reade's tally-ho came charging up just in time to defeat the purpose of the savages.

A shower of rifle-balls and hand-grenades did fearful execution among the howling savages, and in a brief space the survivors fled for their lives. Then out of the cabin amid a torrent of smoke rushed a man and a woman. In her arms the woman clasped a little child.

CHAPTER V.

ROAD AGENTS.

"HEAVEN must have sent you to our rescue. We owe our lives to you," said the settler's wife, as she sank down at the feet of Frank, Reade, who had alighted from the coach which he stopped a moment previously.

The poor woman's husband could scarcely speak

so great was his emotion, but he grasped the hands of his rescuers and shook them warmly.

The cabin was doomed, and the roof fell with a crash sending up a shower of sparks against the black sky.

Frank felt that duty demanded that he should see those whom he had rescued to a place of safety.

He questioned the settler, and the latter assured Frank that there was a settlement twenty miles further West which he desired to reach.

So the inventor took the settler and his wife and child on board the electric tally-ho and promised to convey them to the settlement they desired to reach.

"What is to be done with the redskin we have captured. I don't want to burden the coach with him, and yet I don't like to have him shot. Suppose we turn him loose," said Frank, as the party was getting ready to resume the journey.

"One less o' the pizen whelps every time a red are wiped out," said Yank Beckbridge.

"But it isn't Christian to slay even an Indian save in self defense."

"I ain't gone into the missionary business yet myself," growled the old trapper, a trifle sullenly.

"Luff me git jiss one shot at dat cigar store sign, an' den you see welcome to him for missionary purposes," said Pomp.

"I specs he'd need a missionary powerful bad about den if dar was any funeral fur de red," the darky added showing his ivories in a grin.

"Be the shamrock so green, I'll tell yez what to do with the murderin' spalpeen," cried Barney.

"Well, what is your advice, Barney?" replied Frank.

"Lave the red nagur loose an' let the loikes av me have a bit av a ruction wid him. Sure an' I'll bate the spalpeen until he'll never want to foight the white folks again, be dad."

Frank laughed, and the doctor said:

"It is evident we must get rid of the Indian, and we do not want his blood on our hands. Perhaps it would be as well to allow Barney to teach him a lesson before we let him go."

"Right ye are. Shure an' it's a foine wise man yez are, docthur!" exclaimed Barney.

"I guess you're about right, doctor," assented Frank.

"You may release the Indian and have your ruction with him if you like," added Frank.

"Whoop! Paddy forever! Bogs an' turf! Shades o' Donnybrook! Kape yer two eyes on me, Pomp, til yez see how nate I'll be ather batin' the head av the heathen blackguard!" cried Barney.

Then he and Pomp dragged the big Indian out of the coach, disarmed him and then set him free.

The Indian leaped to his feet with a defiant yell, and he would have taken to his heels and ran for it but he was hemmed in by Frank's party.

Barney was dancing about before the Indian in a moment.

"Ugh. White man want fight, eh?" grunted the huge Indian.

"That's the music this band is playin', begob! Come on, Reddy, ould boy, til I pate yez one good ould Irish belt on the smeller!" roared Barney.

"Ugh! Injun whip white man heap quick!" uttered the huge savage fiercely, and with clinched fists he made a rush at Barney.

"Let her go, Gallagher!" roared the Irishman, who was now in his glory.

The succeeding moment Barney and the Indian were at it tooth and nail.

They were pretty well matched, too. Suddenly they clinched, and as both went to the ground the Indian was seen to reach out into the prairie grass and pick up a long, keen-bladed Sioux scalping-knife, which one of the warriors who had fled must have dropped.

Almost the very next succeeding moment in the struggle which ensued between him and Barney, the Indian came on top, and a cry of horror then went up from Frank Reade and the rest of Barney's friends.

They saw the treacherous Indian raise the scalping knife which he had secured, and they knew that the miscreant meant to murder poor Barney on the spot.

The old trapper's rifle leaped to his shoulder like a flash. He meant to shatter the knife hand of the Indian before his deadly blow could fall upon Barney.

But as the trapper raised his weapon Pomp, with a bellow of rage, ducked his head, and shot forward at the Indian who threatened Barney's life like a human missile from a powerful catapult.

Pomp's head struck the savage below the belt before he could deal the murderous stab he meditated.

The Indian went back on the ground with a loud thud, and he remained motionless.

Pomp's terrific blow had knocked all the breath out of his body.

Barney regained his feet and seized Pomp by the hand.

"Forgive me all I ever done agin yez, Pomp! Begob, ye are a foine gossoon as iver stood in shoe leather, if yez are a nagur! Begob, I'll bate the head av the man as dare say a word agin yez," he said.

"Dat's all right, Barney. I reckon I wasn't er gwine ter see dat red nigger pull his razor on yer an' not took a han' in de game," replied Pomp.

Then Barney pulled out his flask and treated Pomp, and the old trapper said:

"Them two are the drattedest fools I ever run agin. Now they are a-havin' a love feast, an' the next moment they may be fightin' like a pair of wildcats."

"Come. Let's be off. We will leave the redskin to reflect upon the error of his ways. I trust Pomp's method may accomplish his conversion," said Frank Reade.

Then the party boarded the electric tally-ho, and the wonderful conveyance was got in motion without delay.

Ten miles further on the electric vehicle struck the Chippeway road. The stage line from Chippeway to Little Boseman mine traversed the Chippeway road, and so it was kept in pretty good repair by the stage company.

Frank ran the tally-ho along the stage road toward Chippeway, for that was the settlement the rescued settler wanted to go to.

Good time was made on the road, and soon the tally-ho was in among the hills.

Suddenly from ahead came the report of firearms, the clatter of wheels and affrighted cries.

"Hello! What's that?" exclaimed the doctor.

"Ther Chippaway stage are in trouble sure as shootin'. Shouldn't wonder if that there infernal road agent, Injun Ralph, was up ter his old game, and a-holdin' up the coach," replied the old trapper.

"Indian Ralph!" exclaimed Frank. "Ah! I've met the scoundrel before. I shot away his ear, and he vowed vengeance upon me at the time."

"Let's put on all ther speed we hev got an' come down on the road agents if so be they are attackin' the coach," said Yank.

Frank depressed the main lever, and the speed of the coach was increased. A bend in the road had concealed the scene ahead, but this bend was quickly turned by the electric tally-ho.

Then under the moonlight the party in the tally-ho beheld a thrilling sight.

The stage from Chippaway drawn by four fine black horses, and evidently full of passengers, was drawn up on the trail.

The driver had dropped the reins and sat with both hands held above his head, staring with a look of terror at a revolver, which was leveled at his head by a man attired in full Indian garb, and whose face was hidden by a black mask.

"Indian Ralph, to a dead certainty," said Old Yank, as he and Frank Reade looked through the front window of the electric tally-ho.

The road agent who covered the frightened "Jehu" was mounted on a splendid steed, and he had a dozen men with him, who were also well mounted.

These latter had surrounded the Chippaway coach, and, with leveled revolvers, were ordering the passengers to hand over their valuables.

"We'll spoil this night's work for Mr. Indian Ralph!" said Frank.

The next moment Frank gave the word to his friends, and they discharged a volley at the road robbers as they came thundering down upon them in the great tally-ho.

CHAPTER VI.

A PRAIRIE FIRE.

INDIAN RALPH's band was not composed of heroes, and the chief of the road agents was himself a coward. He could hold up a coach full of timid passengers well enough, when backed by his men, but he never contested with anything like an equal force.

The appearance of the electric tally-ho was calculated to strike a feeling of awe and terror to the heart of any one who did not know what its secret was.

Now on through the night, under the moonlight, came the wonderful vehicle at full speed.

The electric lights on the sides of the tally-ho reflected brilliantly, and the blazing light of the electric fire in the horses' eyes flashed forth rays that seemed like unearthly flame.

No driver was visible on the tally-ho. All about it was to the road agents mysterious, terrible, awe inspiring.

Suddenly the electric bell began to ring, and that sound and the detonation of the shots fired from the interior of the vehicle completed the consternation of the road-agents.

They fled, nor stood not on the order of their going.

Pell-mell, as though each man wished to be first in the race, the road-agents dashed away at their best speed.

Then the stage driver, whom it turned out originally came from Readestown, yelled in delight:

"Frank Reade has come! Hurrah, the boss inventor forever!"

And Indian Ralph, hearing the name of the man who had marked him for life, shouted as he turned in the saddle:

"For the second time you hold the winning hand, Frank Reade! Beware of our third meeting!"

Frank's only answer was a defiant laugh, and the road agent chief thundered on and disappeared among the hills.

Then of course the passengers could not say enough pleasant things to Frank. But the young inventor did not pause long to listen to the thanks of the party.

Soon the tally-ho was in motion, continuing toward Chippaway, while the stage coach was driven briskly on toward its destination.

Nothing more was seen of Indian Ralph and his band then.

The electric tally-ho kept on without further adventure until it arrived at a primitive wayside inn ten miles from Chippaway.

There our party stopped for refreshments.

Of course the tally-ho came in for a great deal of admiration, and great was the wonder of the rough miners about the inn when Frank Reade explained for their diversion how the tally-ho was worked.

Barney scented whisky, and while the rest of his party was outside about the coach the Irishman went into the dingy bar-room to get his flask filled.

Almost immediately after Barney entered a six-foot miner strode into the bar-room.

"Hi ham Hinglish, don'tcher know, an' me andie is 'Henglish Hicks. Hi ham ther boss fire drinker-o'-the-Rockies. Hi ham ther terror o' Chippaway, han Hi kin lick henny bloomin' blawsted galoot of a white man in Montana, t'ersay nothink of Irish, niggers er Chinamen," bellowed the English bully.

He was fighting drunk, and he had at one glance discovered Barney's nationality, as he could scarcely have failed to have done, since the map of Ireland was written on Barney's face.

English Hicks was known as a bad man. Everybody about the inn was also aware that he particularly hated Irishmen.

All thought Hicks would unmercifully beat the Irish "tenderfoot," unless he ran for it.

The landlord slyly whispered to Barney.

"You better git out, stranger, or English Hicks will just eat ye up. All the six roughs who just came in with Hicks are his followers, an' they will stand by him."

"Begob, I'm an Irishman, long loife til the loikes av me, an' sure an' it's not the likes av a bafe atin' Englishman as kin scare the loikes av me. Begob, I'll bate the head av the brayin' bully. Sure there niver was an Englishman yet hatched as could stand forinst Barney O'Shea—whoop!"

Thus cried Barney, and he threw off his coat and spit on his hands.

They didn't know Barney there, and all pitied him. They thought he had about as good as ordered his own coffin.

But they were a-going to get acquainted with Barney pretty soon.

The big English bully was destined to make his acquaintance at once.

"Irish! Hi ham ha goin' ter cuff ye all round ther room. Git down hon yer marrer bones han' ax me parding, or Hi start the circus," roared the English rough.

He advanced on Barney as he spoke.

"Somebody hide me. Begob an' Johnny Bull scares the wits out av me," cried Barney, and then with a sudden leap he dealt the huge bully a heavy blow with his clenched fist right between the eyes that made him see stars and dropped him like a log.

"Come on, ye murderin' blackguards! Whoop! Donnybrook lads forever. Ould Ireland's shamrock is on top!" yelled Barney.

He was right in his element now, and in for a free fight with the English bully's gang.

The six roughs who were the Englishman's comrades now rushed at Barney.

The odds were so largely against the brave Irishman that it might have fared hardly with him then, but all at once a jolly voice shouted:

"Clar de track fo' de black cyclone! Dar's a blizzard from de old Kentucky shore right on deck!"

The same moment Pomp shot into the bar-room, and ducking his head, began to butt Barney's assailants, while the Irishman's fists did him good service also.

In just about ten seconds the Englishmen's crowd was the sickest band of roughs and bullies ever seen in Montana.

There was not one of them standing when hearing Frank Reade shout "all aboard," Barney and Pomp rushed out of the inn.

Frank was all ready for a start, and as soon as Pomp and Barney got aboard the tally-ho started. Swiftly it sped away, and Pomp and Barney laughed as they heard the ugly yells which were presently uttered by the roughs they had left behind.

Frank Reade was aware that Barney and Pomp had engaged in a fight at the inn, and he took them to task for it.

But when Barney related how the English bully had first insulted him, Frank said he didn't blame Barney and Pomp at all.

Chippaway village was reached in safety.

There the rescued settler found friends.

After a day's rest, during which time Frank and the old trapper devoted themselves to the study of the old Indian map, upon which they depended to find the lost gold mine, a new start was made.

The electric tally-ho was soon far out on the prairies again.

The dry heat of a September day without rain had parched the prairie grass until it was a mass of yellow hay, save where the ground retained some moisture along the water courses.

Toward the close of a beautiful day old Yank Beckbridge, the trapper, called Frank Reade's attention to an ominous dark cloud on the horizon behind them.

"Do you know what that is?" asked the trapper, pointing.

"I do not, unless it is a prairie fire."

"Right. The wind blows from the east, and as sure as you live that fire is gaining on us."

As he spoke, in the dark on-coming cloud Frank saw the flash of the red devouring flames which were licking up the prairie grass at race horse speed.

"And as I live a big herd of buffler are being chased by the fire, an' the mighty army o' bison are comin' this way too!"

"Then we are menaced by a double peril. We may be run down by the buffalo and be overtaken by the fire."

"Yes. Put on every grain o' 'lectricity ye hev got in ther bilers, an' let the old hosses go for all ther are in 'em!" cried the old trapper.

Frank Reade promptly followed this advice.

"Do you think we can outrun the flames and the buffalo?" asked the doctor, anxiously.

"Perhaps," rejoined Frank.

But as he spoke there came a strange sound from the battery. Frank opened the door of the battery-room, and saw that four of the generating jars had exploded. The speed of the team was decreased.

The buffalo and the chasing flames gained on our friends.

Presently the buffalo herd was all about the coach.

Barney and Pomp were on top of the vehicle. All at once the wheels of the tally-ho struck a rock.

The shock made Pomp lose his balance.

Down he went amid the compact mass of moving buffalo beside the tally-ho.

"Poor Pomp is a goner, begob!" cried Barney, thinking the darky would be trampled to death under the hoofs of the rash buffalo herd.

But not so. By a singular chance Pomp alighted upon the neck of a huge buffalo bull. There Pomp clung for dear life while the frightened animal dashed on at increased speed.

The buffalo herd swerved southward in their course, and while all experienced great fear for Pomp's safety, the electric tally-ho's course was changed, and it was started to follow Pomp on his involuntary buffalo ride.

CHAPTER VII.

POMP'S RIDE—THE ELECTRIC CANE.

It was a very exciting time for Frank Reade and his friends, as they raced on in the electric tally-ho in pursuit of the buffalo bull, upon the back of which Pomp clung for dear life.

The flames of the conflagration behind them were steadily gaining upon the tally-ho, and a dense black cloud of smoke hung above the heads of the fugitives.

The danger was imminent, for the explosion of the four generating jars which formed a part of the electric battery retarded the speed of the wonderful vehicle.

Frank Reade recognized at once the urgent necessity for repairing the battery.

He carried, carefully packed in the supply locker, an extra outfit of galvanic jars, and the necessary chemicals wherewith to charge them, so as to generate galvanic electricity very rapidly.

"Doctor," said Frank, a moment after the buffalo herd had swerved to the southward and thundered by, "please take my place at the levers, and

guide the team, while I try to repair the injury to the battery."

"All right, Frank. Make haste for your life. We must gain more speed, or the flames will run us down," replied the doctor, as he placed himself at the guiding levers.

Frank at once got out the needed jars and appliances to repair the battery, and Barney and Yank Beckbridge, the old trapper, assisted him.

"Begob," said Barney, glancing through the front window, "Pomp, the nagur, is doin' av the bareback act in foine style. Faith, an' it's better thin a circus to see him batin' toime on the hump av the big buffalo. Bedad, it's a bad flx he is in!"

"True, since he cannot jump off of the buffalo without endangering his life," assented Frank.

"No, be me soul Pomp can't be after makin' a jump, for the buffalo kapes in among the herd, an' if Pomp was to lep, it's thramped intil the sod he'd be in the whisk av a skeeter's ear."

"An' ther old bull the coon is ridin' ain't likely to separate from the herd. But if I git half a chance ter drop the sights o' old 'Kill Sure' on the bison, I might drop him. Jist let the old buffler lag behind for a minute, an' I'll try a shot," said the trapper.

"That's an excellent idea, Beckbridge. I can do very well now with Barney's assistance, and so if you will go on top with your rifle, you may gain a chance for a shot at Pomp's strange steed," said Frank.

"Good! Here goes," assented the trapper.

Then, rifle in hand, he ascended to the top of the vehicle.

Just then Pomp's voice was heard.

"Fore de good Lawd, honies, stop dis yere four-legged bullgine, er I'se a goner suah! I'se a hossman, I is, clean from me bates up, but I done draw de line at buffler bulls. 'Deed I does!"

"Hang on, nigger, er there'll be one less monument 'er the fifteenth amendment mighty sudden. Buffler hoofs are mighty depressin' ther system!" called out the old trapper facetiously.

"Dat's all right. Hangin' on an jiss de only job I'se 'gaged in 'bout now, an' I'se doin' two men's work at it. Couldn't done hire dis chile ter do nuffin' else at de present moment. Oh, gollie!"

Pomp gave a yell of fright, as at that moment the frightened bull made an extra high bound.

The darky bounded clear off the animal's back, but fortunately he came down astride of the huge hairy hump again with a bump.

Pomp's wool stood right up straight. He was frightened almost out of his wits, for he had come very near falling.

Despite the extreme peril of Pomp's situation he made such a ludicrous appearance that his friends were compelled to smile.

Beckbridge, with his rifle held ready for a shot, had crouched down on the top of the tally-ho, and he was waiting for an opportunity to drop the buffalo ridden by Pomp, if the animal dropped out of the herd.

Frank worked as swiftly as possible, striving to get the battery in shape again.

And meanwhile the air grew warmer as the pursuing conflagration steadily approached.

"Hasten with your task, Frank," admonished Dr. Vaneyke anxiously.

Frank needed not to be thus urged, and in a shorter space of time than he would have deemed possible, urged by stress of circumstances, he had the battery in order.

Immediately then there was an increase of speed due to the augmented electrical supply, and Barney uttered a delighted "whoop" as the tally-ho forged ahead again at its old speed.

The presence of the yelling darky among the buffalo not only served to frighten the animal he rode, but also alarmed the rest of the herd.

The other animals strove to draw away from Pomp's bull, and presently, as the tally-ho gained rapidly, the bull ridden by Pomp stumbled into a prairie dog's hole, and the other animals forged ahead.

As the huge bull went down Pomp gave a backward leap, and landed all in a heap on the prairie, in the rear of the fallen buffalo.

At the same time, very nearly, the old trapper's rifle cracked, and a shot struck the buffalo. But it was not a dead shot, and the animal gained its feet and staggered on.

But Pomp was saved. The delighted darky sprang up none the worse for his involuntary ride, and in the exuberance of his joy turned a flip-flop that would have done credit to a professional acrobat.

The tally-ho was soon brought to a standstill beside Pomp, and the darky was taken aboard.

"Bedad," exclaimed Barney, as he shook hands with Pomp warmly, "it's the champion buffler rider yez are, an' a buffler ridin' bates the jantin'-car for jouncin' clane out."

"I done wonder if I am all here. 'Spees I done dropped part ob myself on de prairer!" said Pomp, feeling himself ruefully.

"I reckon I done need medicine mighty bad. 'Spose dat you han' me a dose, Barney," he added with a comical wink.

"Faith an' I will that. Shure an' there's the medicine yez are after nadin'," replied Barney.

His flask was forthcoming at once, and Pomp took his "medicine" like a man.

But now the fugitive buffalo herd was observed to act strangely. The animals stumbled and struggled for all the world as though they had all run into a swamp.

"I know what's up!" called out Beckbridge. "The herd has struck a dog village. Ther course o' the tally-ho must be changed, or we'll git caught in the holes."

Frank had now resumed his place at the guiding-lever, and he promptly changed the course of the vehicle.

The prairie dog town was thus skirted, and presently a green bottom land, along a water-course, was reached.

Night had now come, but there was a moon, and the electric lights further illuminated the plains.

Frank ran the tally-ho straight for the green bottom land, and the speed which the electric vehicle was now enabled to attain was sufficient to distance the conflagration in the rear.

The tally-ho reached the bottom land, and there, close by a stream, it was halted.

The flames came on, but they stopped at the edge of the green grass, and struck southward. It was pretty hot where the coach was, and the air was full of smoke and cinders, but soon the fire had passed, and our friends were unharmed.

According to Beckbridge's understanding of the old Indian map, the course of the tally-ho should now be due northwest.

Accordingly, after some little time had elapsed, the tally-ho struck north. It was not necessary to cross the stream which at this point curved almost due west.

As the journey was resumed the doctor observed a strange-looking cane in a rack inside the tally-ho. At a first glance it looked like an ordinary cane, but there was something about it which caused the doctor to suspect otherwise.

So he said to Frank:

"Is that cane some new electrical device of yours?"

"Yes," replied the inventor. "The cane is hollow. In the large metal handle is an electric coil—a miniature battery, in fact. Passing the whole length of the cane is a metal rod, which terminates in the ferrule of the cane at the bottom. The rod is insulated by means of a layer of non-conductor. Thus it is perfectly harmless to the person carrying it by the handle, but one has only to touch a man with the bottom end to give him a severe shock. I made the cane merely for amusement, but it may come handy to startle the natives with yet," replied Frank.

Early the following morning the tally-ho came in sight of a great cattle ranch.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BUCKING MUSTANG—A HUNTED MAN.

FRANK determined to halt at the great cattle ranch, for he observed, as the tally-ho approached the ranch-house, that there was a scene of activity about it, and he was interested in what he saw.

The ranch-house was a large, low structure surrounded by a veranda.

All about it were large, well-built cattle-pens, and vast herds of cattle dotted the surrounding plains.

A number of cowboys, well mounted and riding with the graceful, reckless abandon characteristic of the horsemen of the wild west, were engaged in "rounding up" the herds.

"Rounding up" is the term of the locality for driving in the herds. At this season of the year occurs the "grand round up." The cattle are all driven in and counted. The yearlings, two-year-olds and "mavericks," or those that have as yet escaped branding, are separated from the others, and the process of branding, with the hot iron, which is the stamp of the owner of the herd, is then commenced.

Naturally enough, the arrival of Frank Reade's party with the electric tally-ho occasioned a great deal of excitement at the cattle ranch.

The proprietor of the ranch, and a number of his cowboys rode out to meet our friends, and when Frank introduced himself and his companions the ranchman, who was a genial fellow, welcomed them with true Western hospitality, saying:

"It's an honor and a pleasure to receive a visit from such a distinguished inventor as yourself, Mr. Reade."

Frank modestly disclaimed any celebrity, and said affably:

"We are very glad that chance has led us here, sir, and we should like to witness the interesting and exciting proceedings your men are about."

Of course Frank was invited to stay, and in a few moments all his party were made to feel at home.

The tally-ho was drawn up in front of the ranch-house, and when it had been duly inspected and admired by the wondering ranchman and his cowboys, it was left in charge of the old trapper, to whom the incidents of ranch life were an old story, while the others went out to watch the cowboys.

"We have plenty of horses; suppose you all mount and take a hand in the sport?" invited the ranchman, addressing Frank and his friends.

But Frank looked askance at the vicious looking mustangs and shook his head, as did the doctor.

"Many thanks, but I've seen these mustangs buck before to-day, and I had rather be excused," said Frank, smiling.

The ranchman laughed.

Just then, however, the voices of Pomp and Barney were heard, and, as usual, they were wrangling. They had gone up to a lot of mustangs, which those of the cowboys not yet out among the cattle had led from a corral.

"Begob, an' it's mesel' as will bet yez the price av a gallon av the ould stuff I kin!" cried Barney.

"Gollie! I done took dat bet, Irish," asserted Pomp.

"Begob, an' I'll not back down from me worrind."

"Then youse done bet youse kin ride any ob dem yere mustangs. Am dat de size ob de wager, sah?"

"Bedad, nagur, an' ye hev it right."

"Dat's all right. Den luff me see yer takel dat yellow mustang what's got his ears laid back like dey was ironed down agin his head."

"Bah, what yer thinkin' av? Faith, an' I'll ride the critter an' not half thry. Why didn't yez pick out a wild looking wan?"

The cowboys who were standing by grinned, and looked at each other knowingly.

Frank and the others came up, and they all saw there was sport ahead.

"It's an Irishman I am, begob, an' I'll never take a dare from a nagur. Se here goes to mount the yellor jackass," cried Barney.

Then he threw off his coat and hat, and ran up to the yellow mustang. A cowboy who held the reins surrendered them. Barney grabbed the reins and made an attempt to mount.

Then the way that mustang squatted until his belly almost touched the ground was a sight to see.

Barney was innocent of what was coming, and he said:

"Begob, an' it's well trained the jackass is to knale foreinst the rider to let him mount."

Then with perfect assurance the jolly Irishman leaped upon the back of the mustang, and up went the back of the "bucker" as though his back was a hickory bow, and up also went Barney.

"Murder! Worr! Worr! It's the devil's own jackass I've struck!" he yelled, as he came down on the back of the "bucker," and got a terrible shaking up.

The cowboys shouted with laughter.

Pomp rolled over in the grass and "haw-hawed" in delight, Frank and the others laughed. Barney was a funny sight indeed.

Up he went the next moment, as the mustang bucked again, and then away the animal dashed with Barney clinging to his back with both arms around his neck.

"Whoa! Whoa! Stop, ye spalpeen! Stop, ye murderin' creature, yez! Stop, or bedad I'll bate the head av ye!" roared Barney.

But the mustang tore straight on toward a lot of cattle which were being driven out of a branding-pen.

All at once there was an alarming shout from the men at the branding-pen.

A mad bull, rendered mad for the time by the branding iron and a desperate struggle he had made for escape, crashed through the gate of the branding-pen.

"Get out of the way, stranger, or the mad bull will charge ye!" yelled a cowboy at Barney.

"Worra! Worra! It's kilt I am!" roared poor Barney.

He had no control over the mustang and the bull was now coming right at him, his head down and his terrible horns leveled for a charge, while he uttered bellows of mad rage.

Barney thought it was all up with him then.

"Shure, an' I wish I was safe back in ould Ireland," he groaned.

But the next instant the mustang, understanding his danger, wheeled sharply, and the infuriated bull shot by him.

Meantime Pomp had snatched up a rifle and ran to the rescue. All at once the black dead shot halted, his weapon sprang to his shoulder, and there was a loud report.

Then a cheer went up from all present. Pomp had once more given evidence of his great skill as a marksman.

The mad bull plunged forward and fell on the plain. Pomp's bullet had passed through his heart.

But on went the bucking mustang toward a clump of timber near by. Barney still clung to his back.

As the mustang approached the timber a mounted man dashed out of it. He was hatless, and his face wore an expression of terror. His horse was evidently well-nigh exhausted with hard riding.

Barney had almost lost his wits, and he cried as he beheld the stranger:

"Stop me horse! Stop the long-eared jack rabbit, if yez are a Christian!"

The new-comer was a splendid rider, and he skillfully brought his horse up alongside of Barney's mustang, and caught the animal by the bits.

Barney jumped to the ground the instant the mustang stopped, and making a sudden leap, the animal tore away from the stranger's hold.

"I must on; the men who are pursuing me are close behind!" exclaimed the stranger, and now Barney had time to see that he was a young man, possessed of a fine handsome face, and with an honest look about him altogether that quite won Barney.

"Sure an' who is afther yez?" he asked.

"The Montana vigilantes. The hounds mean to hunt me down and hang me, though I am an innocent man," came the surprising answer.

CHAPTER IX.

WORKING TO SAVE A LIFE.

"Be the harp av Tara, it's a good turn yez have done the loikes av me by stoppin' av the jackass, an' sure an' it's not an Irishman I am at all at all if I don't play the part av a friend foreinst yez!" said generous, reckless old Barney.

"Thanks for your kind intention. But full two score men, whose evil passions are aroused, mean to execute an unjust vengeance upon me, and flight is my only resource."

"But begob, yez can't go far. Sure, yez horse is blown, an', be the powers, it's fallin' under yez the animal will be if ye kape on. You look like an honest man. Faith, an' I'm thinkin' I'll take ye till me masher, Frank Reade, Jr."

"Then lead on. If I can only hide somewhere, and throw the bloodhounds off my track, I may yet be saved. I have heard of Frank Reade, Jr., and I know he is a wonderful man. Would to Heaven I could enlist his sympathy."

"Sure, an' yez may," said Barney.

Then the stranger urged his horse forward, and Barney ran beside him. On they went at full speed, and they soon reached the place where Frank Reade and the others were standing.

"Begob, here's a poor feller that the vigilantes are afther huntin' like he was a wild beast!" cried Barney.

But at that moment the ranchman and the new arrival uttered exclamations of recognition upon beholding each other.

"Why, Tom Hampton! Where in the world did you come from? I thought you were far away at your Eastern home," said the ranchman.

"There is no time for explanations of any length now, friend Benedict. Suffice it to say I have been in Northern Montana for some time. Yesterday at 'Ravens' Gulch' a man was killed and a horse stolen. I bought the stolen horse innocently, as I now suppose of the assassin. The vigilantes were on his trail. He denounced me to them when he was overtaken, swore I was a road robber, and had tried to 'hold him up.' The fact that I was in possession of the stolen horse, and a stranger, sufficed to satisfy the vigilantes, and they are seeking to hound me to my death," said Hampton, and there was not one present who did not feel that he was telling the truth.

"Friends, all!" cried Benedict the ranchman, "I know this man. He is honest and square, and my friend. Will you help me stand by him and protect him?"

There was a shout of assent from the cowboys.

Frank Reade then said:

"You can count on me too, sir. I am always on the side of the right, and it's a pleasure for me to champion the cause of the weak against the strong."

But while these remarks were being made Barney had observed that Pomp was still laughing heartily at the recollection of Barney's mustang ride.

"Begob, an' I saw yez havin' a mighty lot av fun wid yerself, whilst the loikes av me was havin' mesel' pounded intil mince-mate be the yellor jackass. It's on the other side av yer mouth I'll make yez laugh, nagur!" cried Barney.

"Sho, go long wid yer! You done had de laugh on me when I was humpin' on dat bufler. Turn about am fair play, Irish, so doan' yer go for to git yer mad up. You heard my music!"

"Begob, an' it's til a foine pass things are coming whin an Irish gentleman can't take a bit av a

ride widout a nagur givin' av him the guy. Shure, an' did yez think I didn't enjoy the ride? Be me faith, in ould Ireland it's not a ridin' horse yez can find that isn't trained to make the same playful leaps as the yellor divil was up to. Faith, it was all nuts for me. I never enjoyed a ride since I left the ould sod so well before. But it's not a nagur I'm atther allowin' to guy me, all the same," said Barney, and he pulled off his coat and rolled up his sleeves.

"Hole on, darl! I done feel de blod gittin' hot inside ob my head. Hole on, Irish, fo' I butts. Dat am de only way dat dis coon kin cool off his system, when he once done got his fightin' heat on!" warned Pomp.

A fight was imminent, but a diversion occurred just then.

Fully forty mounted men dashed out of the cover whence the fugitive had come, and with shouts of triumph they advanced toward the ranch.

The ranchman blew a whistle, and his cowboys, numbering nearly a score, came riding in. Frank Reade believed that a conflict between the cowboys and vigilantes was imminent. He ran back to the electric tally-ho, gave Beckbridge some instructions, and then returned carrying his electric cane in his hand.

"The vigilantes outnumber us two to one. We must try diplomacy, and avoid a fight if we can," said the ranchman.

"Yes," assented Dr. Vaneyke.

On came the vigilantes until they were quite near. Then Benedict ran his horse forward and shouted: "Halt! You are on my land. Advance no further until you state your business!"

The vigilantes drew rein. Then Frank whispered to the fugitive and the belligerent couple.

"Come, we will gain the electric tally-ho. In it we can distance your foes. Come, Pomp and Barney," said Frank.

Then they started to retreat, accompanied by the doctor. But the vigilantes caught sight of Hampton, and they seemed to comprehend the purpose he had in mind.

Instantly the vigilantes dashed forward, circled by the group of cowboys, and ranged themselves between Frank Reade and his companions and the electric tally-ho, thus cutting off their retreat.

"Too late! We have delayed this move too long!" cried Dr. Vaneyke.

"We should have acted more promptly. But I desired to be sure I was right first," assented Frank.

At the same time he and his comrades ranged themselves beside Hampton. The ranchman and his cowboys also rode up to their support.

"We want that fellow, and we mean ter hang him fer hoss-stealin' an' murder. Surrender the critter or thar'll be trouble," cried out the leader of the vigilantes.

"No, sir. We know he's an honest man. You have been fooled. He bought the horse he rides, and the fellow who set you on his trail is the man who is guilty," retorted Benedict.

"Whoop! It's a ruction we'll have soon. A shindy wid a big S, begob, or it's mightily disappointed I'll be!" cried Barney.

Frank Reade quietly slipped his wonderful electrical cane into Hampton's hand and whispered some instructions in his ear.

"Hello! Here comes the feller who accused Hampton. His hoss stumbled and he fell behind," said one of the vigilantes.

Just then a solitary horseman was seen coming from the timber.

But a climax was now reached in the thrilling scene.

"Forward, men! Charge altogether, and we'll snatch Hampton away from this gang!" cried the vigilantes' leader, and they made a rush.

So sudden was the onset that the men about Hampton were driven back. They hesitated about bloodshed, and in a moment the fugitive was alone on his horse among his deadly foes. His left hand clutched the reins; in his right he brandished Frank Reade's wonderful electrical cane.

Then suddenly the horses of the vigilantes began to rear and plunge, and snort and wheel and dash away, despite all the efforts of their riders. It seemed as though the horses of the vigilantes had gone mad. Screaming, snorting, they tore away in every direction over the plains.

The vigilantes were amazed, a superstitious terror seized them.

But Frank Reade understood it all.

Obedying the instructions the young inventor had given him, Hampton had dashed hither and yon among the vigilantes, touching their horses with the electric cane as he followed his erratic course.

Each horse received a shock as the cane came in contact with it, and this was the secret of the strange conduct of the animals. No wonder they were wild with terror.

"Now for the tally-ho!" shouted the young inventor, and he blew a shrill whistle. Instantly

Beckbridge set the tally-ho in motion, and the vehicle began to advance.

All Frank's party ran for it with Hampton.

Frank came last, having paused to say a parting word to Benedict, the ranchman.

But now the vigilantes came charging back again, and as Frank Reade ran for the tally-ho one of the vigilantes skillfully cast a lasso at him.

The succeeding moment Frank was jerked backward and surrounded by the enraged vigilantes.

CHAPTER X.

A VILLAIN UNMASKED.

DR. VANEYKE, Hampton, Barney and Pomp reached the electric coach. In a moment they gained the interior of the tally-ho, and then, glancing back, they saw what had befallen the young inventor.

All realized that Frank was in great danger. The vigilantes were enraged and anxious to vent their vengeance upon some one.

It was clear that the vigilantes concluded Frank was a friend of Hampton. None of the lynchers knew who Frank was, and they took the tally-ho, which had now come to a stand still, for an ordinary vehicle.

The suspicions of the vigilantes were aroused against Frank, not only because he was evidently a friend to Hampton, but also by reason of the fact that he was a stranger.

"I reckon this chap and the other fellers who ran for the coach with Hampton are his gang. We've lost a good many head o' stock, an' more than one up-country man has been wiped out by the robbers. Let us make an example of this one if we can't get Hampton. Though I reckon we kin run down his coach outfit sooner or later, if we set out fer it," said the leader of the vigilantes.

Just then Benedict rode up and addressed the lynchers sternly. "Men," said he. "The man Hampton I know to be an honest man, and the gentleman you have made a captive is Frank Reade, Jr., the great American inventor, who has just arrived in this part of the country."

The name of Frank Reade made an impression, and the leader of the vigilantes asked of the young inventor, as he regarded him with new interest:

"Are you really Frank Reade, Jr.?"

Frank was about to reply in the affirmative when the man who had accused Hampton and who had fallen behind the vigilantes, rode up.

The fellow heard Benedict pronounce Frank's name.

The eye of the inventor was upon him, and he saw the accuser give a sudden and violent start as their glances met.

A thrill traversed Frank's frame. But he concealed his excitement, and let his eyes drop from the face of the last arrival.

The latter was bearded to the eyes, and he looked like a rough miner, just down from the mountain mines.

"Ha!" he exclaimed in a voice vibrating with fierce exultation, as he shifted a red handkerchief which he had tied about his head as a bandage. "I see ye have caught one o' the pals o' the hoss-thief an' murderer. I saw this chap with the fellow we are hunting a few days ago in Red Bend. They were pals, you bet."

"You lie and you know it!" thundered Frank indignantly.

Meanwhile Frank's friends in the coach had decided how they would assist him. Suddenly, a moment or so later, Barney and Pomp leaped out of the tally-ho.

Frank saw them approaching as he gave the man who denounced him the lie.

He saw that both his devoted servitors wore their fine chain armor over their clothing. The burnished steel flashed in the brilliant sunlight, and Pomp and Barney looked like gallant knights of the days of chivalry.

Frank understood, of course, that the devoted couple meant to make an attempt to extricate him from his situation of peril.

But the inventor hoped to accomplish his own rescue without assistance. Suddenly he caught Barney's eye, and gave him a covert signal.

The Irishman understood the sign and he whispered to Pomp:

"Sure masher Frank wants us to wait a bit. Begob we must halt, but it's mesel' as is achin' to bate the heads av' the rascals."

Both stopped, and Pomp replied:

"Gollee, I'se gwine ter make dem white trash dance the old Virginny breakdown when I gits among 'em. Lor, but de ole doctor done charge our armor chuek full of 'lectricity, an' I specs will make dem trash think dat we un's am two fuss-class thunder and lightning' storms sot on legs; yes, sah."

But when Frank gave the fellow who brought the false accusation against him the lie the latter

"Of course he'll deny it. I say, men, let's stop his wind. There's nothing like making an example of such fellows once we get hold of them."

The speaker and most of the vigilantes had now dismounted.

As the words last above recorded passed the lips of the bearded rascal, who sought by means of false evidence to condemn Frank Reade to death, the young inventor made a sudden forward bound.

The lasso which encircled his neck Frank at the same moment cast aside, and before any one present anticipated his purpose, or could lift a hand to prevent it, he reached his lying accuser.

The succeeding moment Frank clutched the villain by his bushy beard, and then a startling surprise transpired.

The bushy beard the fellow wore came off in Frank's grasp, and with it the bandage about his head.

A dark, evil face, beardless save for a brigandish mustache, was revealed, and it was also seen that but the stump of the fellow's right ear remained on his head.

Frank had recognized him as he rode up.

Now, as the unmasked villain sprang backward and uttered a yell of rage as he sought to draw a weapon, Frank shouted:

"Behold Indian Ralph the road agent! The man of a hundred crimes stands before you!"

There were men present who had seen the face of Indian Ralph when it was not concealed by the mask he always wore when he was in Indian garb at the head of his robber band.

"He is Indian Ralph!" cried several voices.

Then a rush was made for the road-robber.

But he sprang away, and he might have escaped had not Barney and Pomp, at a word from Frank, darted forward and seized the villain.

He received a double electric shock that prostrated him.

The vigilantes were now convinced that they had been duped.

Frank was applauded, and, having bound the road agent hand and foot upon the back of his horse, the lynchers set out with him for the timber.

"We'll hang him as a warning to all his kind. Nobody need fear of meetin' Injun Ralph on the stage roads of Dakota arter to-day," said the leader of the party.

But the road agents' chief was strangely cool and calm in the face of his peril.

"You're sure of your prey, you devils, but there's many a slip between the cup and the lip. I'll stake you an even hundred in Uncle Sam's good gold coin I don't hang to-day!" he said, sneeringly.

"You're game; but your bravado won't do ye no good. Better say yer prayers instead of makin' bets," replied the leader of the vigilantes.

Frank Reade and his friends watched the vigilantes ride away until they entered the timber with their prisoner.

When they had vanished Frank said to Benedict:

"I think I shall now continue my journey."

"I wish you could longer remain my guest. But if you are bent on going on I will not attempt to detain you. However, let me congratulate you on the noble work you have accomplished during your short stay."

"Don't mention it," said Frank, modestly.

"But I must. Such deeds are not to be passed over lightly. Why, man, you have saved a precious human life, and unmasked one of the greatest rascals unhung," replied Benedict.

"Better say greatest rascal hung, for, begob, the laddybuck is no doubt takin' a swing in mid-air be this toime," put in Barney.

It was not now necessary that Hampton should continue his flight, for his innocence was proclaimed. So Frank and his friends said good-bye to the man they had saved and the ranchman, and the tally-ho moved away with all the inventor's party.

The cowboys gave our friends a loud, rousing cheer, and away they went waving their hats and sending back an answering shout.

CHAPTER XI.

A MESSAGE FROM AN UNKNOWN—AN INDIAN SURPRISE.

THE tally-ho made good time for some hours. The route led along a coach road leading north. That night, however, a halt was made on the open prairie, and the road had been left behind for some hours.

Frank directed Pomp and Barney to build a fire and get supper.

Then he and Yank Beckbridge, the old trapper, took their guns and sauntered away toward a prairie island, or clump of timber, standing isolated upon the clear plain.

But not far had Frank and his comrade gone when they beheld a riderless horse come dashing into sight and advance toward them.

"Frank gave a 'horse whistle'—such as is usually employed to call horses—and the coming horse heeded the sound, thus showing he was familiar with it.

Gradually then the animal slackened his speed until he halted near Frank and the old trapper. All animals confided in Frank, seeming to know instinctively that he was their friend.

He had no difficulty in approaching the trembling, panting runaway, and soon the young inventor had grasped the horse by the bit.

Then he saw that the horse, which was snow-white and a remarkably fine animal, was caparisoned with a lady's saddle, and as he examined further, his glance fell upon a folded bit of paper secured in the buckle of the stirrup-straps.

Frank hastened to remove the paper, and unfolding it he found it was merely a fragment torn from a daily newspaper.

But it contained a thrilling message for all that. Upon the blank margin of the newspaper was the following lines of writing inscribed in a delicate female hand with a pencil, and undoubtedly in great haste:

Frank read the writing on the fragment of newspaper aloud to Beckbridge, thus:

"I send Snowflake, my horse, away, with the hope that he may bring help to save me—"

The writing ended abruptly, as though the writer had been interrupted.

"I consait that a darter o' Mother Eve are in danger, an' I sort o' reckon there's some red deviltry a-goin' on in this emilt neighborhood. There's a sort o' loadstun in my natur that draws me ter Injun diffikities, an' I guess I'll make a scout inter the timber," said the old trapper.

"We set out to procure game, such as a deer or an antelope. But we must now think only of serving the poor woman, who is the author of this note. I am with you to the end, Beckbridge," replied Frank.

"Good. But this here are one o' ther kind o' speculations about which ye want to go easy. We're right in the heart o' the worst Sioux country. Old Sitting Bull's village ain't fur off, I reckon, an' the chances are that there's more than one pair o' eyes in the head o' a redskin-a-pipin' us off from the cover of yonder timber at this blessed moment."

"Do you really think concealed savages are near?" said Frank, starting.

"I do, sartin, an' I'll prove it to ye. This hoss ain't run far. Well, jist step around on this side o' ther critter. There, that'll do."

"Heavens, you are right. A Sioux arrow is buried in the pad of the saddle!" exclaimed Frank, as he saw what the keen observant man of the plains had noted as the horse came dashing up.

"Yas, an' two or three cuts where Injun bullets have grazed the citter's back," said Beckbridge.

He indicated some slight wounds on the flank of the horse as he spoke, and then placing the finger of his right hand on the palm of his left, and making the pantomime of checking off each statement in a way which was peculiar to himself, Beckbridge went on.

"What's the conundrum? Ter me it's plain ter sipher. Fust, there was a hoss an' a gal—fust pint. Second, there was Injuns—second pint. Third, there was a hoss without the gal, an' Injun with the gal. There's ther hull thing 'cordin' to the rule o' three, an' it's jist as plain as the back end o' the spellin' book, where all the pages are torn out."

"Yes, and we must rescue the captive."

"Correct. Ther ye hev' the final answer o' the 'sample. But if we go on ter that timber right now, you'll stop an Injun bullet an' so will I. My Injun load-stone are a pulling me fer that timber mighty hard now, so I know there's redskins a lurkin' on the edge of it."

"You have a singular way of expressing yourself, friend Beckbridge, but I understand you."

"I'm powerful glad to hear it," replied the trapper dryly.

"Now what are we agoin' ter do? That's ther question I read in yer face," he went on.

"Right," Frank assented.

"Well now I'll tell ye. We hev got to lay low until it gets dark, and that ain't agoin' ter be long. Then, while we leave the others to look out for the tally-ho, which the reds may try ter capture, you an' I'll go out ter circumvent whatsoever deviltry ther reds are up to."

"I see the wisdom of your plan," assented Frank.

"Sartin you do. Now let's go back to the tally-ho."

They turned and were retracing their steps, Frank leading the beautiful white horse, who had brought its mistress' message, when all at once the peaceful quietude of the vast solitude at even-tide was rudely broken in upon.

A chorus of loud, fierce yells—the blood-curdling war-whoops of the Sioux Indians—rang out over the plains.

The appalling sound emanated from the direction of the timber.

Turning, Frank and Beckbridge beheld a thrilling sight under the fading light of day.

A band of Sioux, mounted upon their hardy mustangs, had suddenly emerged from the cover of the prairie island.

They numbered two score hideously painted braves, who were on the war-path, and bent upon exterminating the whites, or driving them from the hunting grounds of Montana.

Of course these were not the Indians Frank Reade and his party had encountered at the burning cabin of the settler, as previously recorded.

The sudden outburst of yells with which the Indians signalized their rush from the timber, frightened the white horse Frank was leading.

The animal gave a tremendous leap, and Frank was compelled to relinquish his hold upon the bridle rein.

Then away through the gloaming dashed the white horse, and Frank and the old trapper broke into a run.

It was now with them a race for life.

They knew they must reach the tally-ho ahead of the savages. But the speed of the mounted men of the Sioux band of course exceeded that of the two whites on foot.

The Sioux gained on Frank and Beckbridge very rapidly.

Seeing they were to be run down, Beckbridge cried:

"This way, Frank. There's small bufler waller yonder, an' I reckon we'll git inter it an' try to hold ther reds off a spell."

They changed their course, and a moment subsequently they were in a depression where a water-hole, now dry, had been wallowed by a bison.

Scarcely had Frank and his comrade gained the wallow when the Sioux began to circle about them, making a pandemonium upon the plain with their exultant yells.

"Treed, by powder! My Injun load-stun tells me ther reds will be drawn to us until they raise our scalps or we give 'em the slip, which I don't at this speakin' see no likely way o' doin'," said Beckbridge.

"My friends will not desert us. The tally-ho is a fort on wheels, and just the thing for an Indian battle on the plains," said Frank hopefully.

Then, with their repeating rifles, Frank and the old trapper opened fire on the Sioux, while showers of bullets and arrows flew over their heads and all around them, tearing up the dirt and dashing it in their faces so they could scarcely see to take aim.

CHAPTER XII.

HEMMED IN BY THE INDIANS.

THE charge of the Indians from the timber had been witnessed by Dr. Vaneyke, Barney and Pomp.

We cannot depict their excitement and anxiety. With nerves tense with suspense and alarm, and intense solicitude written on their faces, Barney and Pomp breathlessly watched the thrilling race for life in which Frank Reade and Beckbridge were engaged.

The doctor meanwhile hastily started the tally-ho. He meant to run the vehicle forward, so that Frank Reade and the old trapper might reach it.

But we have seen that the savages came on too swiftly for the accomplishment of the doctor's purpose.

Soon a small army of the red demons were between the buffalo-wallow in which Frank and Beckbridge had sought refuge and the tally-ho.

While a part of the Sioux band surrounded the buffalo-wallow, the remainder inaugurated a determined attack upon the electric tally-ho.

"Be gob!" cried Barney, as the doctor brought the coach to a stand-still in the midst of the howling Sioux. "Fat's the matter wid the loikes av ye? Sure an' why don't ye charge on wid the tally-ho til the rescue av Masther Frank?"

"I mean to open the way and deal these savages a blow they will not forget. I see that a decisive battle is impending," replied the doctor.

Then he directed Pomp and Barney to get out a certain box marked "W. R. B." which was among the supplies and scientific appliances in the locker. The Irishman and the darky hastened to obey the doctor, and meanwhile the bullets of the Indians pattered against the metallic plating of the tally-ho like hail.

"Whoop!" cried Barney, lifting on his end of the box marked "W. R. B." "But it's rainin' lead outside!"

"Yah! dat's so. You better done gone out and took a baff, Irish!" said Pomp.

"Sure, and it's more than a lead storm it would take to clane a nagur white."

"Do yer mean to cast 'sinuations, sah?"

"Don't ye swear at me, nagur!"

"Golly, I didn't swear."

"Yes, yer did! Begob, fer two pins I'd bate the head av yez!"

"Am dat so? I'll gib yer three."

"Worra! Oh! the devil fly away wid the nagur! He's broke the big toe av me."

Pomp had given his end of the box a jerk, and down came Barney's end on the Irishman's toes.

"Bedad, it's addir' insult til injury the nagur is doin'. I'll bate the head av him! I'm a peaceul mon, but, begob, whin a nagur murders the loikes av me it's time to kiek!" roared Barney.

Then off came his coat.

"Keep yer close on!" cried Pomp, tantalizingly.

"Here, here, you rascals, your master is in danger! Quick! Quick! Open the box, or we may be too late to save Frank Reade and the old trapper!" cried the doctor.

"Begob, that's so. Sure, an' I'll settle wid ye another time, nagur," said Barney.

"I se right at home, sah, all de time. You won't have to get no search warrant fer found dis chille, I done tole yer," replied Pomp.

Then in a moment or so they opened the box marked W. R. B., and took out four sections of what looked like rifle barrels set in a frame. These were quickly set up on each side of the coach where there were rows of loop-holes.

"Now then," cried the doctor when each of the tubes projected through a loop-hole, "we shall see if Frank Reade's new scientific appliance is a success."

As he spoke the doctor attached a couple of wires to a series of strange-looking clock-work compartments at the ends of the queer racks.

"This is a Winchester Repeating Battery. Something entirely new. Winchester rifles of sixteen shot repetition, each to work on the Gatling gun plan improved. The discharging power is electricity. This hopper full of bullets is the self-feed of the rifles. When the electricity is applied a fusillade can be kept up for as long a time as bullets are poured into the hopper," continued the doctor.

"Begob, it's like a coffee-mill!" exclaimed Barney.

"Dat's so, an' mighty strong coffee it done make," assented Pomp.

But a moment or two had actually been consumed in getting out the battery and arranging it.

"Now all is ready. We will open fire on the redskins, and make a charge on them with some hope of success," said Dr. Vaneyke.

But now the Indians, growing bolder and bolder, came riding right up to the tally-ho.

There were a couple of metal hand-rails around the top of the vehicles.

These rails the doctor had already charged full of electricity.

The Indians attempted to board the coach, and as the hand-rails afforded the only hold for them they seized them.

But they didn't hold on.

Every Indian who touched the hand-rails received a shock, and in some instances it was so severe that the Sioux leaped clean off his pony. A more surprised set of redmen were never seen.

The way they scudded off howling, as fast as they touched the electric rods, made Pomp and Barney fairly yell with delight.

But suddenly the tally-ho began to move again. Then a rattling detonation, like the discharge of a volley of musketry, was heard.

The electric tally-ho seemed to belch forth fire and smoke, and the bullets fell in a deadly shower.

Frank Reade's new electric battery was at work, and it was, indeed, a success.

Straight for the buffalo wallow the electric tally-ho was guided.

And as the wonderful vehicle came on and on over the plains the savages fled in consternation before it.

The discharge of the electric battery was destructive and many of the Indians' ponies dashed riderless away from the scene of conflict.

On, on, like a cyclone, resistless swept the tally-ho, now that the rain of death it belched forth cleared the way of the foe.

Through the cloud of powder smoke and the gathering shadows Dr. Vaneyke and Pomp peered ahead through the window of the coach.

They were anxiously trying to catch a glimpse of Frank and Beckbridge.

They saw the howling Sioux circling around the buffalo-wallow. They heard the report of many rifle shots.

A dread fear took possession of the minds of the young inventor's friends.

They thought that Frank and Beckbridge must have exhausted their supply of ammunition. In that case the very worst was to be anticipated.

If they were left without the means of defense their capture was sure. A cold sweat started upon the doctor's brow.

Barney groaned and Pomp evinced his despair by muttering:

"Po' Mars Frank am a goner dis time, I 'spec." All the electricity was already turned on to the machinery of the vehicle, and its speed could not be further augmented.

Suddenly the Indians about the buffalo-wallow were seen riding away uttering wild, exultant yells that indicated a victory.

And on shot the tally-ho.

The buffalo-wallow was reached, and then the inmates of the electric vehicle saw that the depression in the plain was empty.

They had expected to find the dead bodies of Frank Reade and the old trapper, but their remains were not there. The truth dawned upon the doctor's mind. "Frank Reade and his old comrade have been carried away into captivity by the Indians!" cried the doctor.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DETERMINED REDSKIN.

The doctor stated the actual truth when he said that Frank Reade and his comrade had been carried away into captivity by the Indians.

The young inventor and the old trapper had heroically defended their position in the buffalo wallow.

With their repeating rifles they held their red foe-men off until their ammunition failed.

Then, when they had fired their last shot, they yielded to despair.

The red demons swooped down upon them, and, after a hand to hand fight they were overpowered and dragged away.

Their captors hastily mounted them on ponies, and they were hurried swiftly away.

When the electric tally-ho arrived at the buffalo wallow the Sioux who had made Frank and Beck-bridge captives were entering the timber at a considerable distance.

The doctor and his companions knew that they could not pursue the Indians into the woods with the tally-ho.

They saw that immediate pursuit could not be made, and so they did not follow the red marauders further.

The scene of the desperate fight at the buffalo wallow was an evidence of the heroic and determined resistance which the young inventor and Beckbridge had made.

All around the buffalo wallow the ground was strawn with the bodies of the redskins who had fallen under the bullets of the two white heroes.

"Worra! worra! Sure, an' it was as fine a bit av a ruction as a mon could wish for that Masther Frank had here. Faith, an' it's sorry I am that I missed it," said Barney, regretfully, as he surveyed the scene of recent conflict.

"You're de biggest fool I ebber seed. You're allers done spilin' fer a fight. 'Spec's you oughter be glad dat you'se got de scalp on de top ob yer head 'bout now," said Pomp.

Barney and the darky had got out of the tally-ho, and they were walking about among the dead Indians.

Just as Pomp spoke last Barney uttered a whoop, and made a jump straight up into the air.

"Worra! Worra! I'm stabbed!" roared Barney, dancing about like mad.

"Gollie, Irish hab done gone crazy!" exclaimed Pomp.

"So it really seems. What is the matter, Barney?" the doctor asked.

"The red nagur cut me foot. Sure an' he ain't dead at all, at all!" answered Barney, and he hopped about on one foot as he pointed at the recumbent form of an Indian.

Pomp made a dash at the savage.

Then a surprising occurrence took place.

The seemingly dead Sioux sprang to his feet and started to run.

Pomp leaped after him, shouting:

"Hole on dar, Mr. Redskin! I'se got a mighty big bone ter pick wid youse!"

"Catch the blackguard, Pomp! Catch the red heathen what cut me foot, an' begob, I'll be yer friend for loife, so I will!" shouted Barney.

Pomp was a good runner, and he gave the Indian a fine chase.

All at once both vanished, just as though they had stumbled into a pitfall on the plains.

Barney uttered a cry of alarm, and the doctor evinced his surprise and solicitude by exclaiming:

"What can have happened now?"

"Begob, and they only stumbled intil another buffalo wallow!" cried Barney, as the succeeding moment he again saw Pomp and the Indian.

"Whoop! Give me black nagurs agin' red ivery day in the week, an' twice on Sunday, begob. Faith-an' Pomp has surrounded the redskin black-guard!" added Barney, delightedly.

Just then he saw Pomp had the Indian by the throat, and was holding a pistol at his head.

In a moment Pomp began to march the Indian back toward the electric tally-ho.

Then the doctor examined Barney's foot, and found that he had received a cut on the instep. But the wound was a mere scratch, and the Irishman was really more frightened than hurt.

"Ye see, doctor, the red nagur just rached out and gave me a dig wid his knife as I passed him," explained Barney.

Pomp came up with the Indian as the doctor applied a plaster to Barney's wound, and then it was seen that a rifle ball had creased the head of the Indian and knocked him senseless. His comrades had left him for dead beside the buffalo wallow.

"Let me put a head on the blackguard. Sure an' I'll bate the ugly mug av him. Faith, an' I'll tache him not to cut an Irish gentleman in the foot!" cried Barney.

He would have fallen upon the redskin tooth and nail, but the doctor interposed.

"Hold, Barney!" he cried.

"Faith, begob, an' will yez be after tellin' me to shake hands wid the red nagur, I dunno?" said Barney indignantly.

"No. But do you not understand that this Indian may be of great service to us," said the doctor.

"Gollie, Irish, dat am so. We's got to save Masther Frank, an' I done spec dat de doctinks he'll make de red nigger help us," cried Pomp.

"You have the idea exactly, Pomp," assented the doctor.

"Then, begob, the Injun is saved!" said Barney.

"Dat's right. Now we's got to find out how the Injun is a-gwine to help us."

"I will explain my idea. It is this: Since the Indians have captured Frank Reade and the trapper, in accordance with the custom of the Sioux, they will, no doubt, hurry our friends away to some village."

"Dat's a fac."

"And it may be difficult to find the Indian village."

"Without a guide, begob," said Barney.

"So it's my idea to make the Indian Pomp has captured act as our guide."

"Faith an' yez have a head on your shoulders, doctor," said Barney admiringly.

The doctor smiled as he rejoined seriously:

"The lives of our friends and comrades are in deadly peril, and it rests with us alone to rescue them. The task is one not to be undertaken lightly. The powerful Sioux tribe will be pitted against us, and we must place our greatest reliance on the wonderful electric tally-ho, and the scientific appliances we have brought with us."

"Thruer fer ye, docthur. But let's be after questioning the red bathen thief o' the worruld," said Barney.

"Yes, I propose to do so."

Pomp had bound the hands of the Indian behind his back, and put a noosed rope around his neck.

He now led his captive before the doctor.

"Do you understand English?" the doctor asked.

"Ugh! Santah know heaps white man's talk," replied the Indian, with evident pride.

"Good. Your knowledge will facilitate matters."

"Ugh! Santah heap brave. No help white man."

"Ah, you have overheard our conversation, eh? Well, if you have made up your mind not to assist us we shall have to find means to make you change your determination."

"White man much talk, say little," replied the savage, contemptuously.

"We shall see."

"Be gcb, an' it's mesel' as 'ull make the red nagur serve us!" cried Barney.

"Gollie! I'se de one to took charge ob dat. I done cotch the red nigger an' he am my meat," said Pomp.

"Wait, I will try the Indian further," replied the doctor.

Then he again addressed the Indian:

"Where will the Sioux take their captives?"

"To the village of Sitting Bull."

"Where is that?"

"Where the white man will never find it."

"You shall lead us to the village of Sitting Bull."

"Never. White man may kill Santah, him no guide them."

"We shall see. Barney get out the hand-battery," replied the doctor.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE POWER OF ELECTRICITY—AN UNEXPECTED ATTACK.

"Be the shamrock so green, docthur, yez never axed the loikes av me to do anything that wasnt mare plazin' til mesel'. Sure, an' it's the battery

will loosen the tongue av the red nagur," said Barney.

Then he hastened to the electric tally-ho, and presently returned with a small battery, such as are ordinarily used in public exhibitions to give "shocks."

But the doctor did not propose to liberate the hands of the murderous redskin in order to enable him to grasp the handles of the battery. He was far too wily for that.

Instead, he directed Barney and Pomp to wind a wire, which he attached to each handle of the battery, around each of the Indian's ankles.

This the two jolly comrades hastened to attempt very willingly. The devoted fellows were entirely ready to undertake anything looking to the rescue of their beloved master.

But Mr. Sioux objected.

"White men heap fools. No make Santah serve them by tying box to him feet," he remonstrated.

"Begob, an' yez will find this the funniest bit av a box yez iver tackled, Mr. Injun," remarked Barney, as he attempted to secure the wire about the ankle of the Indian.

"Ugh!" grunted the savage, contemptuously, and then he gave Barney a sudden kick that doubled him up like a jack-knife.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pomp.

But the next moment his mirth was changed to grief, as the Indian dealt him a kick similar to the one he had just administered to Barney.

Pomp went sprawling, and though his arms were still securely bound behind his back, the Indian started to run.

The doctor, however, promptly leveled his rifle at the Indian, and shouted:

"Halt, or I'll drop you in your tracks!"

The Indian knew that it was death to go on, and so he reluctantly abandoned his foolhardy attempt at escape and obeyed the doctor's command.

Barney and Pomp were on their feet in the twinkling of an eye, as one may say, and the way in which the irate pair went for that belligerent redskin was a sight worth seeing.

In a moment they had him on the ground, and despite his stubborn efforts at resistance, he was now unable to foil his captors' purpose.

Very soon the wires attached to the handles of the electric battery were secured about the Indian's ankles, as the doctor desired.

The good old man, in the great humanity of his kindly nature, certainly had no desire to inflict unnecessary punishment or torture upon the treacherous Indian. But he was fully resolved that he should be subjugated.

The necessity that the Indian should be compelled to aid in the deliverance of Frank Reade and the old trapper, was sufficient to make the good doctor regard any means for the attainment of the desired end as justifiable and right.

As soon as the wires were attached around the ankles of the Indian, the doctor turned on the electricity, and then ensued a ludicrous scene.

The Indian began to execute a dance such as probably was never witnessed before. The way he jumped about and yelled and howled was something surprising to behold.

And for Barney and Pomp, the redskin's exhibition was great fun. They laughed in delight, and Pomp began to pat his hands as though he was keeping time for a breakdown.

"How yer done like dat? Go in fo' de cake. Heel an' toe, hoe it down, Injun! Yah! yah!" cried Pomp.

"Ugh! ugh! Santah take all white men's scalp! Burn at stake. Make run gantlet!" yelled the Indian.

But the electricity was running through his limbs at lightning speed, and at last he fell down.

"Tell me where Sitting Bull's village is and promise to conduct us there!" said the doctor.

"Ugh! Injun do that. Let the lightning-box be taken off," panted the exhausted savage.

The doctor answered sternly:

"The white man will release the Indian, but if he speaks with a crooked tongue he will turn the lightning snakes, which he carries in the coach yonder, loose upon him, and they are a thousand times worse than the 'medicine box.'"

"Santah will speak with a straight tongue," replied the Indian.

"Release him," said the doctor, and Barney and Pomp made haste to remove the wires from about the ankles of the Indian.

"Now, where is Sitting Bull's village?" the doctor demanded.

Santah pointed away to the south-west beyond the growth of timber, in which the Sioux had disappeared with Frank and Beckbridge, and he said:

"The village of the great chief, Sitting Bull, is yonder among the mountains, where the white man has never gone."

"And you will guide us there and make no attempt to betray us to your people?"

"Yes, Santah so promises."

"Think you the white captives will be taken to the village of Sitting Bull?"

"Yes, they are sure to go there. The great chief has spoken, and said that the white men who are taken prisoners shall be brought to him."

The doctor was not confiding enough to think for a moment that the Indian would keep faith with him if a favorable opportunity for treachery presented itself. But he meant to watch the Indian so closely as to render it impossible for him to betray his trust.

"Very good. You will guide us on the trail of your people and the white prisoners, and if we save them you shall be set free unharmed. But if we do not find the village of Sitting Bull you will never see the lodges of the Sioux again," said the doctor.

But as these words emanated from the lips of the excellent old scientist there occurred a most startling incident.

While the episode just recorded was transpiring a great danger unseen and unsuspected was insidiously approaching our friends.

Four Sioux scouts had been crawling back toward the buffalo wallow from a depression in the prairie not far from the timber, and they had now almost reached the electric tally-ho.

The stealthy red trailers had discovered that Santah had been left alive upon the scene of recent conflict and that he had fallen into the hands of the whites.

They came now like serpents, so silent and still, bent upon a surprise. They hoped to slay the whites, rescue Santah and capture the wonderful coach.

But suddenly, when the four warriors were very near, Barney chanced to catch a glimpse of a feathered head as it appeared for an instant above the tall grass.

Like a flash Barney snatched up his rifle, which he had brought from the coach, and blazed away at the place where the head of the Indian had vanished.

Then the warwhoop of the Indians rang out shrill and terrible, and the four warriors made a dash at the whites.

They discharged their rifles as they came.

Quick as thought itself the doctor grasped Santah and held him before him as a shield. Barney and Pomp returned the fire of the Sioux and dropped down in the grass.

One of the Indians fell under Pomp's deadly aim and the other three dashed at the hiding place of Pomp and Barney.

As if to intensify the thrilling scene, at this supreme moment Santah, with a desperate effort, succeeded in freeing his hands. An instant and the snowy hands of the redskin were fastened upon the throat of the old doctor, and the murderous savage was strangling the good old man.

CHAPTER XV.

"MEN OF FIRE."

BUT Barney and Pomp witnessed Santah's sudden attack upon the doctor, and as may well be presumed, they did not leave the aged scientist at the mercy of the revengeful Indian long.

"Bang, bang!" came the sharp, whip-like crack of Pomp and Barney's rifles, as they discharged them almost simultaneously.

The two foremost of the Sioux fell, and the one surviving member of the party which had come to take the whites by surprise, turned and fled precipitately.

Then Barney and Pomp bounded at the treacherous Santah. They were only restrained from executing a summary and fatal punishment upon him by the consideration that his life had become of value, as an essential to the trailing of Frank Reade's captors.

Probably Santah thought that the moment of his final doom had arrived when he saw Pomp and Barney bounding at him.

But the instinct of self-preservation remained dominant, and prompted the savage. He flung the half-strangled doctor from him, and as the latter sank upon the prairie the desperate Sioux snatched up the rifle which the aged scientist had dropped.

He meant to turn the weapon upon Barney and Pomp. But as he was in the very act of leveling it Barney brought his own rifle, which he had clubbed, down upon his head with great force.

"Whoop! Begob an' the battle is ours, Pomp, me jewel!" cried Barney, and he sprang to the doctor's side as Santah, the Sioux, fell and remained motionless.

"Worra! Worra! But don't be afther tellin' me yez are gone dead intirely, doctor?" cried the kind-hearted Irishman with real solicitude, observing that the old scientist had lost consciousness.

"You've got no sense in dat big head of yours, Barney. Deed does yer spec' dat de doctor am agwine ter speak up an' tell yer he am dead?" said

Pomp impatiently, as he proceeded to secure the fallen Santah.

Pomp saw that Barney's blow had only deprived the Sioux of his senses transiently, and he did not mean that he should repeat his act of liberation and attack.

"Shut up, nagur!" cried Barney, and he poured a small quantity of whisky down the doctor's throat. The result was admirable.

In a very short space of time the doctor revived, and assured his companions that he was all right again.

Santah came to his senses, and then he was placed in the tally-ho, and the others boarded it. The doctor, in the absence of Frank Reade, assumed the position of chief engineer, and congratulating themselves on their escape, and hopeful that they might accomplish the rescue of the celebrated inventor and his comrade in captivity the party proceeded on.

The doctor guided the tally-ho so that they skirted the "motte" or island of timber on the prairie, and soon the swift tally-ho was beyond the cover.

The blue ethereal vault above was devoid of clouds, and the moon reflected its pale light without a single obstacle to shut it off from the sleeping world below.

Afar the prairie was alight, and upon its level surface objects were readily discernible with surprising distinctness, even at a great distance.

"Have the savage captors of our friends left the timber, and already obtained a good start on their supposed journey to the village of Sitting Bull, or are they yet concealed in the prairie island?" said the doctor.

"It is me own idea, begob, that the red nagurs have fled long ago," said Barney.

The doctor made no immediate reply, but he produced a field-glass especially designed for moonlight observations, and which he had himself constructed.

With this powerful night-glass at his eye the doctor swept the wide expanse of the vast solitude in all directions.

The doctor's scrutiny was rewarded by a discovery, and the question he had just propounded was satisfactorily answered.

Away to the southwest, almost at the line where earth and sky blended, he saw a line of minute moving objects.

Quickly, then, the scientist, aided by the magnifying power of his wonderful nocturnal telescope, discerned that the objects he had discovered were a large band of mounted Indians.

The doctor made known his discovery, and very soon the tally-ho reached the plainly defined trail of the Indians, which led in the direction of the band he had sighted.

The tally-ho made good speed on the trail, but some hours later the Indians disappeared, and presently in the shadowy distance a range of hills with mountains beyond them were developed to the sight of the inmates of the tally-ho.

"Sure, an' we don't want the red nagurs to know we are afther them," said Barney.

"No, and so I have kept the tally-ho far enough behind the Indians thus far to be out of range with the naked eye. They cannot have discovered us," the doctor answered.

Soon the electric vehicle approached the hills in which the Sioux had disappeared. Then the doctor turned off the electricity from the driving machinery and stopped the tally-ho.

"Golly! I done reckon dat me an' Barney better gone ahead an' make a scout 'bout now," suggested Pomp.

"Yes, I approve of that idea. We must not allow the tally-ho to be drawn into an ambush if we can prevent it," said the doctor.

"Less fix up ter scare de wits out of dem red niggers if we done find 'em," said Pomp to Barney.

"Be the powers, yez are roight. We'll put on our suits-of-mail and rub thim all over wid phosphorus, so that we'll look like men made of fire in the night."

"Dat's jess de cheese."

In a few brief moments Barney and Pomp had put their fine steel armor on over their clothes again, and then they rubbed each other all over with phosphorus.

Startling indeed was the result.

In the shadows they seemed like a pair of blazing specters, like demons of flame, unearthly, weird, infernal, if you will.

"Excellent; you will frighten the redskins out of their wits if they see you now," said the doctor, clapping his hands in delight.

Barney and Pomp each carried a brace of revolvers in their belts, and their rifles were slung upon their backs by means of straps.

They shook hands with the doctor, and glided away silently into the shadowy hills when all their preparations had been made.

Presently the two brave fellows found themselves in a rocky pass. They advanced with cau-

tion for a mile or more. Then they emerged into a valley among the hills. Here there were clumps of stunted trees and bushes and open glades through which a mountain stream wandered.

"Begob," Barney whispered to Pomp, "as they halted in the shadow of a clump of trees, 'it's me-self as is afther thinkin' this is a likely bit av a spot for an Injun camping place. Let's go along like we was a-walkin' on eggs, for be the powers we may come ontill the nagurs before we know it.'"

Pomp assented, and creeping forward cautiously they suddenly made the discovery of camp-fires ahead. They advanced further and beheld a thrilling sight. They saw Frank Reade's captors in camp. And more, they discovered the young inventor and Beckbridge bound to stakes, and saw the Sioux heaping dry wood about them. It was evident the savages intended to burn their victims at the stake.

A moment and the red flames leaped up about Frank Reade and the old trapper.

Then suddenly two unearthly yells rang out upon the night, and into the Indian camp rushed two terrible blazing specters.

The Indians yelled to each other:

"The evil spirits! The evil spirits!"

There was intense excitement and alarm in the Indian camp.

CHAPTER XVI.

AT THE TORTURE-STAKE.

FRANK READE and Yank Beckbridge, the old trapper, had not finally abandoned all hope of escape until they were bound to the torture-stake in the Indian camp. Then, however, their hearts must have failed them.

The two brave and chivalrous spirits were not only despairing on their own account, but because they felt that other imperiled whites must now remain in captivity among the Sioux. In the prairie island, guarded by half a dozen Indians, whom Frank Reade's captors joined, the young inventor and his companion found a young and beautiful white maiden of sixteen, and her mother.

The female captives were the wife and daughter of a settler, who had been making a journey in their company with an emigrant train.

The train had been surprised and captured, but only the mother and daughter we have mentioned survived the slaughter of the battle.

The fair captives felt that they were destined for a fate worse than death, and Frank had found an opportunity to converse with them, and thus acquire some knowledge of them.

Their name was Eldridge, and the young girl was called Eve. She it was who had written the note which Frank had found secured to the saddle of the white horse.

The beautiful snowy steed was the maiden's own saddle horse, and the girl had taught the intelligent creature to obey all her commands.

She informed Frank that she had been detected making "the talking paper," as the savages designated it, and had barely time to thrust it incomplete into the saddle-buckle, and send her trained horse away at full speed, when the Indian guard came rushing at her.

Frank assured the fair captive and her mother that he had hoped to render them assistance, and he told how he had been captured.

Beckbridge, the trapper, said little. All his thoughts seemed centered upon escape, and a look of intense anxiety was discernible on his features.

"The fact are, me pard," said Beckbridge to Frank in a whisper, "I'm desperate afear'd the map of the lost gold mine trail will now fall inter ther hands of 'the pizen Sioux vermin'ts."

"Have you then the map now on your person?" asked Frank.

"Yas; it's in a little buckskin bag hung around my neck. I'm pretty considerable worritted, pardner. If the pizen Sioux onet sot eyes on ter that old Injun trac'n, they could read the sign-writ-in' a mighty sight easier than you or I kin."

"That's true. And with the secret of the location of the lost gold mine once in the possession of the Sioux, we might as well abandon all hope of ever reaching it."

"Perzactly. By powder, I'm clean on pins and needles 'bout ther map. I s'pose, though, we might better be worritin' our heads about what kivers 'em. Scaps are right in the line of ther varmint's, an' my Injun loadstun seems ter be a-drawin' my har right fer the steel of a Sioux scalpin'-knife at the present time."

Further conversation was at this point interrupted.

The captors of Frank Reade and his eccentric old comrade hurried them away out of the timber in company with the female captives.

The inventor and his friend knew the devotion of the comrades they had left behind them in the electric tally-ho would be proven by an attempt at their rescue.

But the Sioux were so numerous, so well able to guard against surprise or stratagem, that Frank and Beckbridge scarcely dared hope that their rescue could be accomplished, even by a resort to the scientific appliance contained in the wonderful tally-ho.

The map of the route to the lost gold mine had not yet been discovered on the person of the old trapper when the Indians went into camp among the hills and bound them to the stake.

As the band reached the hills they were met by Sitting Bull, the head chief of the great Sioux nation, in person. The bloodthirsty old chief decided that the white men should be burnt to death at the stake on the spot instead of being marched on to his village.

A few moments before Frank and Beckbridge were secured to the torture stake, as they reclined upon the ground, bound securely hand and foot, Eve Eldridge, the beautiful girl captive, who, with her mother, were left unbound, came to them with a drink of clear, cool water from the adjacent stream.

At this time the Indians were watching Frank and Beckbridge, and it was recognized as utterly futile to attempt to have the white women try to cut their bonds or make a rush to escape.

The Indians did not offer to prevent the white women's kindly service. They were allowed to give the white men all the drink they needed.

Mrs. Eldridge carelessly stood, for a time, so that her daughter, who held a cup of cold water to the parched lips of the old trapper, was, for a moment or so, hidden from the sight of the watchful Indians.

During that brief space of time a lot of by-play was going on between Beckbridge and Eve Eldridge which none of the Indians, and not even Frank Reade himself, suspected.

Presently, having spoken words of comfort and sympathy, the two ladies withdrew from the side of Frank and the trapper.

Not many moments subsequently the two captives were seized, and stripped to the waist and bound to the torture-stakes.

Frank Reade was thunderstruck when he saw Beckbridge's hunting shirt and rude garment rudely torn from his back, and yet saw no trace of the buckskin-bag which the trapper wore suspended about his neck, and which contained the map of the lost gold mine.

But now, standing in the shadow of doom, gold had lost its value for Frank Reade. He regarded it as naught, and for his life he would have surrendered all the wealth of the world.

Frank's mind was occupied with serious thoughts, and he gave the mysterious disappearance of the map of the lost gold mine little consideration.

The fate which the young inventor was now confronted with was probably the most terrible which savage cruelty could desire.

The ordeal of fire was about to begin, and already, as mentioned, the red flames began to lick up the dry brush which had been heaped about the captives when Frank Reade heard the strange unearthly shouts with which Pomp and Barney heralded their approach.

The young inventor recognized the voices of his faithful followers, and his heart gave a leap of sudden hope.

The coming of Pomp and Barney was to Frank Reade and Beckbridge like the arrival of two angels of deliverance.

When Barney and the darky came in sight wrapped in seemingly unearthly flames, Frank was delighted.

No wonder the Indians shouted:

"The evil spirit! The evil spirit!"

The Sioux rushed about in confusion for a moment, but Sitting Bull called upon several of his men to fire upon the "fire fiends."

A fusillade of bullets were discharged at Pomp and Barney, but their armor turned the leaden storm, and they were not harmed.

At first the savages thought the strange looking men were supernatural. Now they were sure of it. "Getchewanito, the mighty!" cried a chief, using the Sioux term for the Indian deity, "send away the fire demons whom the bullets of thy red sons cannot harm!"

Barney and Pomp continued to advance. Suddenly two balls of fire sped from their hands and exploded among the Sioux.

CHAPTER XVII.

BECKBRIDGE IN DISGUISE.

BARNEY and Pomp had brought with them a supply of explosive fire-balls, and they had now hurled two of them among the Sioux.

Then, while they showered the fire-balls among the Indians and uttered the most terrible yells they were capable of, the two brave fellows made a sudden forward rush.

They well knew that they must not allow the

Sioux to recover from their fright, and that the rescue must be accomplished at once if at all.

In a moment the "fire-men" reached the two captives at the torture-stake. They hurled away the blazing brush, and with quick, powerful blows of their hunting knives severed the cords that bound the captives.

The Sioux had gathered about the two white women, and Frank understood that another opportunity must be sought for their rescue.

The succeeding moment the young inventor, with Beckbridge and the two rescuers, were in full flight.

Then, and not until then, Sitting Bull and his warriors understood that the white man's strange arts had been employed to blind them to the truth, and that their captives were being spirited away before their very eyes.

Then such a howl of rage as went up from those murderous hostiles was seldom heard before. They were enraged at their own folly in standing by and allowing the captives to leave the camp.

Sitting Bull led the pursuit of our friends, which was inaugurated as soon as the Indians, to a degree, recovered from their surprise.

But a guard was left to prevent the escape of the two ladies.

The slight delay made by the Sioux in starting the chase was of great value to the fugitives.

They thus were enabled to gain a start which they meant should prove their salvation.

All four were excellent runners. Despite his years, the hale and robust old trapper kept pace with the foremost.

And so on they went in a swift race for life until the valley among the hills was left far behind, and the rocky pass leading to the same was reached.

The Sioux came bounding on the trail close behind. Beckbridge suddenly halted and faced the enemy. He had snatched up his rifle when he fled from his foes, and now he was ready to fire. The detonation of his weapon was the succeeding moment blended with the reports of two other rifles.

Barney and Pomp also fired on the Sioux.

The pursuit was checked for an instant.

As the fugitives ran Barney had told Frank where he had left the tally-ho.

The idea occurred to the inventor that the tally-ho might traverse the rocky pass. He put his fingers to his lips and blew a shrill whistle.

This was a signal long before agreed upon between him and the doctor, and Frank knew that hearing it, if possible, his old friend would run the tally-ho toward him.

On and on continued Frank and his comrades. From time to time, as the pursuing Sioux came within range, they wheeled and discharged a volley at the redskins.

But suddenly, when they were almost clear of the rocky pass, the rattle of wheels was heard, and then they beheld the welcome sight of the tally-ho.

With the bell ringing, the electric lights blazing on each side of the coach, and flashing from the glass eyes of the leaders, the tally-ho was a remarkable and impressive sight.

The Sioux thought so. They had a wholesale dread of the tally-ho and the electric repeating-battery, which had proven so destructive to them when they made their attack on the coach previously.

As the tally-ho came on the Sioux halted. Then Frank Reade and his comrade gained the electric vehicle, and entered it. The old doctor welcomed them with tears of joy in his eyes. But Santah, whose presence was explained to Frank and Beckbridge, sat bolt upright upon the bench in the coach to which he was bound and grunted in guttural tones:

"Some day great chief Sitting Bull kill all white men."

The tally-ho quickly retreated from the rocky pass and Frank remarked:

"The captive ladies must not be deserted."

Beckbridge brought the stock of his rifle down emphatically as he said:

"Right ye are. Not another mile kin we go in search of the lost gold mine until we have rescued the white gal."

"You are a true heart. Your resolve to save the ladies does you credit," said Frank.

"An' I want ter save ther map of ther treasure mine."

"I thought you must have lost it."

"Not so. I gave it to Eve Eldridge to keep for me. She took it off my neck in the buckskin bag when she brought me a drink of water. The gal has the map of the lost gold mine, and we must save her, and git back the map before we can hope to find the mine."

"That's so. But anyhow, I was resolved to try once more to rescue the young girl and her mother," replied Frank.

The tally-ho was now running on the open plains again.

"Let us consider our future plans," said Frank, presently.

"Yas. We hev' got ter make out what we're agoin' fer ter do in the way o' rescuin' the gals. Jist at the present speakin' ther Injun loadstun in my natur are a drawin' powerful towards the pizen varmints, an' I reckon I can't fight agin ther magnetic traction long. Ther fac' is I want ter git arter the varmints right off, and start a quiet little retail business in the way o' hair liftin'."

Old Beckbridge shifted an enormous quid of tobacco from one side of his jaw to the other, glanced solemnly at vacancy and expectorated a deluge of nicotine out of the window of the tally-ho, just missing Pomp's head by the sixteenth of an inch, to be accurate in measurement.

"Golly, I specs it am lucky dat dis yere coon wan't born ter be drown, Mister Trapper. I'd gib yer fer ter know dat I can't swim," said Pomp, as he dodged.

"Colored man, heed ther advice o' one as knows whereof he exhorts. Larn ter swim, fer sometimes ther smartest on us can't paddle his own canoe, an' are obleeged ter take ter ther water."

"There is wisdom in that remark, friend Beckbridge. But what is your advice now as to how we shall undertake to save the captive ladies?" said Frank.

"I consait we shill have ter work some dodge, an' I've got an idee a-workin' inside o' my brain-box. I am drawn powerful toward the red nigger settin' starin' at us like a graven image. I reckon I'll hev to send Santah arter ther gals. That are ter say, send the outer Santah with ther inner man a white trapper, ther fust letters of whose name are Yank Beckbridge."

"Ah! You mean to personate Santah among the redskins?" said Frank.

"Perzactly!" laconically replied the trapper.

A discussion of plans and contingencies upon which we need not dwell ensued.

Then Yank Beckbridge, fully disguised as Santah, left the tally-ho and struck into the woods.

The tally-ho was drawn up in the shadow of a small clump of timber, and there the return of the daring old trapper from his mission of rescue was anxiously awaited by his comrades.

The first faint light of a new day was glowing along the far eastern horizon, when Barney, who stood watch on the top of the coach, shouted:

"Horsemen, an' white men at that, in sight on the plains, begoh, an' they are follerin' our trail!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ENEMIES OF LITTLE SUNSHINE AND BECKBRIDGE.

FRANK READE, and the others with him in the tally-ho, were very much surprised when Barney shouted the announcement of his discovery of the approach of a mounted party of white men.

But the thought that the new-comers might aid them in the rescue of the white captives in the event of Yank Beckbridge's failure, was the first reflection in their minds.

The white horsemen continued to approach rapidly. They rode straight toward the hills, following the trail the tally-ho had made in entering the rocky pass.

"Let us take an observation of the strangers through my glass," said Dr. Vaneyke.

"Do so by all means, doctor, for you know one cannot always be sure of the character of white men here on these far western plains," replied Frank.

The doctor placed his field-glass to his eyes, and through it he looked steadily for the space of several moments.

The doctor's face, however, betrayed emotion. He seemed to be somewhat startled by what he saw, and his brow clouded.

"What have you discovered?" asked Frank Reade, with some anxiety evinced in his tone.

"I do not like the looks of the men who are approaching. They seem to me to be a rough, dangerous party whom we would do well to avoid."

"Bedad, an' the min will go intil the pass on our trail. Sure, an' Pomp an' meself kin git back there in the whisk av a nagur's heel foreninst thim," said Barney.

"Dat's so. But what fo' we go dar?" questioned Pomp.

"Faith, an' the head av a nagur is no use to him at all. Don't ye see, ye thick head yez, that the likes av us might hide in the rocks beside the pass and hear af the blackguards was sayin' whin they wint foreninst us."

"Gollie! We do dat. But doan yer make no marks agin dis chile's head. I tell yer, honey, a nigger's head am what he pends on. Yahl yahl yahl! Deed, yer oughter know dat by dis time," assented Pomp.

Frank Reade and the doctor approved of Barney's plan, and having made some preparations, the two old comrades left the tally-ho and crept

swiftly away to the mouth of the rocky pass. There they concealed themselves.

They had not long to wait before the mounted white men rode into the pass.

The party numbered more than a score. They were a wild, reckless-looking band. Their faces would have testified against them in a court of justice, and at the first glance Barney whispered to Pomp:

"It's an ugly lot they are, sure."

"Right yer am, I'se mos' sure," assented Pomp.

"Listen now, nagur, till we are afther hearin' fat the blackguards are saying."

Pomp did not make any answer to this admonition.

"The trail is getting fresher, men. We shall overtake our man presently," said a man who rode at the head of the band, and who was evidently a half-breed.

"Yes, and when we do overtake him, what then, Brant Forges?" said another of the party.

"Death! Death for him when the secret is ours," responded the half-breed chief.

"Yank Beckbridge will die hard," said the other.

"Yes, but die he must. They say he loves Little Sunshine as though she was his own child. While he lives, Adam Marvan, your plot against the little one cannot succeed. Yank Beckbridge is the man to baffle you."

"Perhaps. But now you have a personal interest in the capture of Beckbridge. First I engaged you and your lawless band to help find Beckbridge and the child, Owen Strathmore's little daughter, and who is known as Little Sunshine. You had, at the outset, no interest in the undertaking save to earn my gold."

"True," replied the half-breed. "But since then I made a discovery. I traced the possession of a secret I have long vowed yet to make mine to Yank Beckbridge, the old trapper."

"Yes."

"It was a rare piece of good fortune. Coming upon the scene of a battle between old Getchewan's band and Sioux enemies I found the old chief of 'the gold mine Indians' of Montana dead. It seemed that all the old chief's band had perished. I had been on old Getchewan's trail for many days, for it was the secret of the lost gold mine, which the old Indian held, that I had vowed to have. I searched the dead chief, hoping to discover a clue, but I found nothing, and then I was ready to conclude that I was doomed to failure. But all at once a half-breed—my foster brother—who had acted as my advance scout, appeared, dropping from a tree at my feet. It was now evening. My brother made haste to tell me that the night before, when he found himself dying, Getchewan had revealed the secret of the lost gold mine to Yank Beckbridge, the trapper, and given him an old Indian map which would enable him to find it. My brother had arrived at the scene as the old chief gave the trapper the mine map. The white trapper and his comrade did not discover my brother. He kept well concealed. Since the news I have related came to me I have had a two-fold interest in finding Beckbridge. I mean to wrest from him the map of the lost mine and earn your gold. I have trailed the old trapper well, and but for the fact that he had linked his fortunes with the great inventor, Frank Reade, Jr., we should have run the trapper down before this. The infernal electric tally-ho's speed has enabled Beckbridge to keep out of our way thus far, though I do not believe he even suspects we are trailing him."

"Evidently not. Now Brant Forges, you have confided in me. I will tell you why I want Beckbridge out of the way and precisely what interest I have in securing the child Little Sunshine. The child believes herself to be the daughter of Owen Strathmore. Such is the real truth. Strathmore's wife, now deceased, was the only daughter of old Squire Baldwin of Ohio, a man of great wealth. When his daughter married Strathmore against his will the old squire vowed he would disinherit his daughter who was his only child. But the old man did not do so. When he died, some time since, he left a will which gave his fortune to his daughter, Strathmore's wife, or in case of her death the fortune was to go to her children, if any. But if she died without leaving children, then the fortune was to go to a nephew by the name of Adam Marvan, myself."

"Now Owen Strathmore does not know of the death of his wife's father, nor of this will. I met him in Sioux City last spring. I had set out to find him and make sure that the heirs who stood in my way were removed. Strathmore was broke, and in despair. I was in disguise, and he did not know me. I assumed to befriend him, and learned that his wife was dead, and that he had one child called Little Sunshine, who lived with him at a lone prairie lodge, in company with an old trapper, Beckbridge by name, who was his pard. Strathmore was in desperate need of a certain sum

of money to develop a gold claim he had great faith in. I offered to loan him the money for one year. A singular compact was made between us, and put in the form of a legal contract by a lawyer. I loaned Strathmore five thousand dollars for one year. If at the expiration of that year, which will be next spring, he failed to repay me my five thousand dollars he bound himself to surrender his daughter, Little Sunshine, to me, as a parent legally may when the other party agrees to adopt the child, as I did agree."

"A singular contract, certainly."

"Yes. But Owen Strathmore was so very confident that he would find millions of dollars' worth of gold in his claim that he laughed when he signed the contract, and said that in less than a month's time he would repay my loan."

"But he did not?"

"No. His claim proved worthless. Then recently I heard he had been captured by the Indians and killed. So I resolved to seize the child, Little Sunshine, at once, as it is clear Strathmore can never make good his part of our contract. I am warned that Beckbridge would be likely to send a bullet through the heart of any one who attempted to take Little Sunshine away from him against his will, and so I hired you with your band to help me find the old trapper, and secure the child who stands between me and a fortune."

As the villain thus spoke, Barney and Pomp were startled by the ringing of the electric bell on the tally-ho.

Instantly they began a covered retreat among the rocks, and soon came out on the plains.

Then a scene which thrilled them with awful fear for the tally-ho and their friends burst upon their sight.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TRAPPER HEARS OF SECRET FOES.

The sight which Pomp and Barney beheld, when they emerged from the concealment of the rocky pass where they had overheard the nefarious plot which revealed the secret of Yank Beckbridge's old pard—Owen Strathmore—and explained why the one supreme purpose of his life had become the acquirement of gold, was in truth most startling.

To the southward, directing their course straight for the electric tally-ho, Barney and his colored comrade saw two parties, composed respectively of whites and redskins.

The foremost were Yank Beckbridge and Eve Eldridge and her mother. The Sioux were in pursuit, and every member of Sitting Bull's band had joined in the chase.

But it was not the sight of the large band of Indians who were advancing toward the electric tally-ho which of itself occasioned the consternation now experienced by Frank Reade's devoted servitors.

There was yet another reason for their apprehension that a calamity to the great mechanical triumph of the inventor's skill was presaged.

A red flag was waving from the top of the electric tally-ho.

This was a danger signal which had long previously been agreed upon between Frank Reade and his comrades.

Now as plainly as though the information had been conveyed to them in so many words, Barney and Pomp at once understood that an accident of some sort had happened during their absence which endangered the electric tally-ho.

They were perplexed to comprehend how an accident could have occurred to the tally-ho while it was standing still, for they observed that the position of the remarkable vehicle had not been changed since they left it.

And yet they were assured that Frank Reade would certainly not have displayed the danger signal save he was confident that the threatened peril was of the gravest character.

At one sweeping glance, which took in all the wild prairie landscape and the living beings upon it, Barney and Pomp saw that Beckbridge, the old trapper, and the rescued white women were engaged in a thrilling race for life.

They heard Beckbridge shout in ringing tones that vibrated with anxiety:

"Come on with yer 'lectric wagin, pard, fer ther gals are about done out, an' I'm desprit consarned 'bout 'em."

Alarmed, entreating cries burst from the lips of the mother and daughter, and yet despite these moving appeals the electric tally-ho did not move. Barney shook his head, and Pomp's comical black face assumed an expression of blank surprise.

But he and his comrade did not for a second delay about proceeding. They ran for the electric tally-ho as if for dear life.

Behind them, in the rocky pass, they could hear the voices of Brant Forges—the half-breed outlaw and Adam Marvan, 'Little Sunshine's' secret and vindictive foe.

Barney and Pomp were, of course, fully aware

that the sound of the bell on the electric tally-ho must have been heard by the half-breed's band and they doubted not that the wretches would presently seek the origin of the sound which was so strange to those remote solitudes.

They momentarily expected to see and hear the outlaws in pursuit of them. Putting forth their best speed, however, Barney and Pomp made excellent time.

The electric tally-ho was at comparatively but a short distance from the place where they made their entree upon the prairie as they came from the hills.

Breathless with hard running, Barney and Pomp arrived at the electric tally-ho.

Frank Reade and Dr. Vaneyke were inside the vehicle.

But the former met Barney and Pomp at the door.

"Fat's up, Master Frank?" cried Barney, panting.

"The treacherous redskin Santah— But not an instant must be given to explanation now. Hasten to check the advance of the Indians, or Beckbridge and the ladies will be run down!" replied Frank Reade.

Almost exhausted as they were with the race already run, Barney and Pomp made another effort. The inspiration of their chivalrous purpose gave them new strength.

They met Beckbridge, and while the ladies were continuing their flight toward the electric tally-ho the trapper, Barney and Pomp crouched in the prairie grass and momentarily held the enemy in check.

The rifles of the three brave fellows belched forth in a destructive fusillade. Sitting Bull's warriors recoiled.

Then up and on for the electric conveyance, still covering the retreat of the ladies, went the three heroes.

Mrs. Eldridge and her daughter Eve gained the electric tally-ho, but the supreme effort was accomplished only at the expenditure of all their strength.

They were assisted into the vehicle by Dr. Vaneyke, for Frank Reade was busy with wrench and hammer, at work in the forward part of the conveyance.

Santah, the Sioux, lay in the bottom of the tally-ho like one dead, and there was a blood-stain on his face.

As soon as they saw that the ladies had entered the electric tally-ho, Beckbridge, Barney and Pomp gave the redskins one farewell volley and then ran as swiftly as possible for the vehicle themselves.

The Sioux came to a halt at a safe distance from the tally-ho, which had inspired them with such great dread.

At this juncture Brant Forges and Adam Marvan rode out of the adjacent hills. The half-breed and the secret enemy of Little Sunshine and her lost father rode side by side, and their outlaw comrades came in the rear.

Beckbridge, the trapper, from within the tally-ho caught sight of the white outlaws as they appeared.

"By powder!" exclaimed the eccentric scout, "now we are in for more trouble. Yonder comes the wust renegade outlaw gang in the Nor'west. Brant Forges are half Sioux himself, an' he's hand-and-glove with ther reds!"

"Those fellows are white men. They will seek no doubt to take sides against us, for all that, if, as you say, they are outlaws bent on plunder and friendly to the Indians," said the doctor.

"And yet we cannot retreat or take to flight for half an hour yet. Santah, the Indian, managed to sever his bonds by rubbing them against the metal guards of the seat to which he was bound. I discovered him just as he sprang up, and seeing that his escape was foiled, the Indian seized yonder sledge, and before I could anticipate or prevent it he dealt the connecting rod of the main lever a tremendous blow, which drove it down against the cylinder of the clock-work appliance under the lever board, and it is impossible to stir the tally-ho until the damage is repaired. I am at work at the bent rod now, and will have no difficulty in repairing it if I am only granted time," said Frank Reade.

"Traps an' trappers! The Injun load-stone in my natur' are a-drawin' my huntin'-knife toward the pizen varmint on the floor. But I consait he's petered out already?" said Beckbridge.

"No, I knocked him senseless as an act of self-defense," replied Frank.

"Ther varmint ain't no use to us now, an' if you say so I'll turn him loose. The sooner we're rid o' him the better."

"All right. Put him out of the coach," assented Frank, while he continued to work away at repairing the injured driving-rod.

Injun stock takes a tumble. It nigh a'most breaks me heart ter let the pizen critter go with his hair on his cocoa-nut. But I s'pose 'tain't 'zact-

ly etterkit ter do any hair-liftin' afore ther ladies," remarked Beckbridge, regretfully.

Then he pitched Santah out of the tally-ho head first.

Much to the surprise of all the redskin bounded up and made off on a run instantly.

"Possum was his game, by powder! Gewheh! Ther pizen critter hez run off with me buckskin trousers that I put onter him when I turned Injun ter rescue the gals. Wouldn't hev' lost them buckskins fer a farm in Texas. A keep-sake them was, as I sot some at store by. An' ter think o' a pizen red runnin' around in Yank Beckbridge's buckskins. This world are a vale o' tears an' sorrier. I tell ye it comes home ter a feller when he loses his only pair o' trousers."

The old trapper glanced ruefully at the Indian leggings he wore and consoled himself wit h a fresh chew of tobacco.

A stream of liquid nicotine was ejected skillfully from between his teeth and Pomp had another narrow escape from the flood.

"Look year, Mister Trapper, jes' you done gib dis colored gent a word o' warnin' nex' time youse gwine ter open der dam. You better keep dammed up ter flood dem yere white trash what's arter ye an' means ter steal a gal named Little Sunshine away from yer," said Pomp.

The old trapper started. His bronzed face paled, and he exclaimed in tones of agitation:

"What do you mean, nigger? Speak out, I've got a charge o' buckshot for the critter as dares lift a finger agin my old pard's leetle gal."

CHAPTER XX.

AN EXPLOSION ON THE PRAIRIE.

"Be the powers av turf, I'll tell yez all about it. Sure, an' it's a blackguard's scheme that Pomp an' meself overheard be chance," said Barney.

Then he went on and narrated the conversation which he and Pomp had overheard between the half-breed outlaw, Brant Forges, and Adam Marvan.

Beckbridge grasped the entire subject at once. He saw the power of gold impelled Marvan to get Little Sunshine in his possession, as she alone stood between him and the inheritance left by the child's grandfather, "Squire" Baldwin.

The trapper understood now that the most powerful incentive had actuated his partner, Owen Strathmore, in his quest for wealth. He knew that the father of Little Sunshine had been working to save his child from the consequences of his own short-sighted bargain.

A clear realization of the fact that a new and much to be regretted obstacle had arisen to hamper and impede the search for the lost gold mine came to the trapper.

He understood that henceforth he was a marked man, and that he would be trailed and hunted by the half-breed outlaw, who sought to steal away his map of the route to the lost gold mine.

"We hev' got new trouble on our hands sure as shootin'." The two white fiends, Forges and Marvan, are more ter dreaded than all the redskins. I foresee we hev' got to have a long an' despit struggle fer ther lost mines," said Beckbridge, seriously, when a moment's silence had succeeded the conclusion of Barney's narrative.

"Gollie! I done say fo' suah dat trouble am comin' mighty soon!" said Pomp.

"The nagur is right. See ther blackguard spalpeens av Satan are shakin' hands wid the red nagurs an' they are all good friends. The half an' half are plintin' at us, an' begorra, it's mesel' as will wager a pint av the ould stuff he's axin' the red nagur ter come on at us," said Barney.

The indications were that the Irishman had hit upon the truth.

"It's necessary that we should intimidate those red scoundrels and the white outlaws anew, before the latter can explain away the superstitions the former have formed regarding the tally-ho," said Frank.

"Begob, I'm the mon fer the job!" cried Barney.

"You're always done jump yahself up ter de fust of ebbertying. I'se de pusson fer de job myself!" put in Pomp.

"Begorra, sorry's the day a nagur tries to take the place av an Irish gentleman. It's breakin' the mug av yez I'll be afther doin'!"

"Keep away from me, white man. I done spit on my han's, an' when I done do dat I'se bad," warned Pomp.

"Take back the insult yez gave me, or begob, it's moppin' up av the flure wid a nagur is the act nixt on the programme, begob!"

Barney made a pass at Pomp, but the nimble darky dodged, and the Irishman bruised his fist against the metal side of the tally-ho.

"Worra! worra! The nagur haz murdered me!" roared Barney.

"Shut up! You are served right. Now, then, what I want is this; a blasting cartridge package must be carried out to the white and red scoun-

dreils, and suddenly and mysteriously exploded. I count upon the result to strike them with consternation so deeply that they will not attempt to attack the tally-ho before we are under way again," said Frank Reade, sternly.

"Whoop! But it's the illegant foine brain yez have, Masther Frank. Shure an' Barney O'Shea is the boy to give the spalpeens beyant the bit av a Fourth av July celebration, just as you say."

"Then make haste. Get out the keg of cartridges, and take one end of that coil of a thousand yards of fine malleable wire, crawl away to the enemy under cover of the tall prairie grass, carrying the keg and the end of the wire, which will unwind as you go. When you are among the villains place the keg, attach your end of the wire to it and crawl back. As soon as you are at a safe distance I'll do my part. You must tell me when all is ready by giving three sharp jerks on the wire," said Frank.

"Begob, I understand. Yez mane to sind a charge of electricity through the wire from the battery in the tally-ho, and explode the whole keg av cartridges among the murtherin' blackguards."

"Yes," Three moments subsequently Barney was crawling away from the tally-ho with a small keg under one arm and a wire in his hand, which played out from a revolving standard in the tally-ho as he advanced.

The doctor watched the unwinding wire and looked to it that it did not become entangled, while Frank Reade worked away as rapidly as possible at the task of repairing the injury wrought by the vandal hand of the vindictive Santah.

Mrs. Eldridge and Eve were able to converse by this time, and the latter placed the buckskin bag containing the map of the lost gold mine in Beckbridge's hand saying:

"Here is the article with which you intrusted me. We owe our lives to you. I am very happy to think I may have been of some slight service to you."

"Don't mention it, gal. Don't mention it. Ther Beckbridges as a famby allers was clannish. Me mother was a baister an' me father was a paster. Mother worked in a tailor shop, father pasted bills fer a poster of 'em. Between ther two they stuck together. Your name's Eve. You're like enough a distant relation o' ther Beckbridges. Had a great grandmother several thousand years ago name o' Eve. She took up a claim in a gardin' 'long of a feller named Adam. All went fuss class with 'em 'til one day an Injun come along an' give Eve a pizened apple an' she give Adam a bite, an' then the duce an' all was to pay. Some claim 'twas a serpent g'n my great grandmother Eve ther apple, but I know 'twas an Injun 'cause unbeknownst to Adam an' Eve, there was an old trapper, a friend o' mine, hid in the garden and he seed the Injun," said Beckbridge gravely, while his merry eyes twinkled.

The ladies smiled.

"You are a strange humorist. Under such circumstances as the present, Sir Trapper, I should apprehend that your mood would not be suited to levity," said Mrs. Eldridge.

"Never cry till yer hurt, area motter o' the Beckbridge famby, handed down in the Beckbridge famby ever since one o' my great uncles acted as a guide fer a party of emigrants that was crossin' ther Red Sea ter git away from a big Injun name o' Pharo."

"I am afraid your version of the events to which you refer are scarcely orthodox," said the doctor, laughing.

Pomp at that instant made a sudden jump and tumbled over the stand of wire which was now rapidly unwinding, as Barney advanced toward the enemy under cover of the tall grass.

A stream of tobacco juice passed the spot Pomp had vacated so suddenly and went through the open window.

At the same moment a chorus of exultant shouts was uttered by Brant Forges, the half-breed, and his men.

The doctor picked up his field-glass, and through it saw Santah evidently making some communication to the white outlaws whom he had now reached.

The doctor mentioned what he saw.

"The Injun haz up an' told ther renegades that I am here all right, an' they are a-yelling fer joy at ther news. But they haven't wiped out old Yank or got the treasure map or Little Sunshine yit!" said Beckbridge.

Some suspenseful moments now elapsed.

The occupants of the tally-ho watched the united bands of white and red foes narrowly.

Presently Frank Reade turned from his task and said:

"I've almost repaired the damage done to the machinery by the redskins. It's time Barney reached the enemy and gave the signal to fire the cartridge cask."

"Yes," assented the doctor.

"We shall hear from Barney soon, I think, unless the Indians and their white allies detect him, and I can as yet see no sign to indicate such a thing," he added, still peering through his glass.

A moment or so more went by.

Then suddenly there came three sharp twitches on the wire.

"The signal!" exclaimed Frank, and with a pair of pincers he severed the wire and attached the end to the battery.

An instant and a tremendous report—the detonation of an explosion was heard. A great red flame flashed for an instant among the enemy, and then a dense black smoke swept upward amid flying missiles.

CHAPTER XXI.

NO COLORED FOLKS WANTED.

"BUSTED, by powder!" exclaimed Beckbridge.

"Yes, and in a literal sense," assented Frank Reade, as the electric current transmitted along the wire from the battery in the tally-ho occasioned the explosion of the cartridge cask.

"Gollie! Dat Irisher done bully! I spees dat he hagot away from de wercinly ob dat yar 'sposion, er he wouldn't hab up an' pulled de wire," said Pomp, clapping his hands in delight.

The mysterious explosion, for such it was to the Indians and the white outlaws, occasioned them the greatest consternation and threw the united bands into confusion.

This was certainly the only result that could have ensued, for the explosion sent a shower of destructive missiles among the murderous savages and the white renegades.

Wild yells, howls of mingled rage and terror made a dreadful pandemonium, and the comparative quietude was converted into a saturnalia of confused sounds.

The savages ran hither and yon, and the white renegades scattered away from the vicinity of the explosion as swiftly as possible.

And, amid all the confusion and tumult, the two men who were the wolves upon the trail of old Yank Beckbridge and those he loved rode unscathed—lived, perhaps to hunt the noble old trapper and innocent Little Sunshine to their doom.

Those inside the tally-ho watched the scene upon the prairie in silence for a time. But all became anxious as the moments passed and Barney did not return.

But presently, to the satisfaction of all concerned, Frank Reade said, as he drew a deep breath of relief and put aside his implements for repairing the machinery:

"I have fixed the bent bar all right. Now let us see if the machinery will work?"

Frank made the requisite test, applying the motive power from the battery to the delicate machinery gradually, so as to avoid anything like a shock or a jar.

Immediately the tally-ho began to move.

"All right. We can leave our enemies behind very easily now, I think," said Frank.

"But dis yere colored pusson ain't a-gwine fer ter desert ole Barney. No, sah! I'se gwine ter find dat Irisher," cried Pomp earnestly.

"Certainly we shall not run away and leave Barney," said Frank.

"I done thought dat you couldn't done gone leave Barrey behind ter be skulped by dem red niggers," replied Pomp.

As he spoke the door of the tally-ho opened, and Barney, who had crept up unseen, leaped inside all safe and sound.

Barney had caught the last part of Pomp's remark. He heard Pomp say "leave Barney behind ter be skulped by dem red niggers," and he did not hear the preceding words.

"Be the turf an' the bogs! Worra, me soul, but it's the loikes av me, Barney O'Shea, as will make the murtherin' spalpeen av a nagur ate the words av him, begob! It's lavin' an Irish gentleman behind wid the red nagurs y'd be afther doin', is it? Faith an' it's a nagur that wull be left beyan' us!" roared Barney.

"Barney—I golly, I—"

"Shut up, ye nagur! Shut up wid yez, an' foight loike a mon. Shure, an' it's an ill-gant gintel bit av a shindy I'll be afther givin' yez, an' I'll bate the head av yez in a whisk! Orrah! it's lavin' av the loikes av me yez would be afther doin'! Whoop!"

Barney came at Pomp like a mad bull.

"Hold! Ther presence of ther ladies are agin yer. Tain't ettekit. Put it off. Yer kin chaw each other up nice an' flue some other time," said Beckbridge, throwing himself between the irate Irishman and Pomp.

Barney was nothing if not gallant.

He halted, and turned to Mrs. Eldridge and Eva with a low bow.

"Excuse me, ladies. Faith an' savin' yer presence I would be afther massaerin' the nagur."

"Irish, you're de—" began Pomp, when Beck-

bridge discharged a nicotine overflow which shut Pomp off by compelling him to dodge.

The tally-ho was now set in motion, and as it sped quickly away Frank interposed his authority and the trouble between Pomp and Barney was for the time at least averted.

The enemy was soon left behind and out of sight. Then Mrs. Eldridge and Eve were questioned at some length, and when Frank Reade learned that they had friends at Wind river, he decided to take them to that settlement.

The journey to Wind river was made in safety, and having seen the ladies welcomed by their friends, Frank Reade set the heads of his team north-west again and went forward on what Beckbridge claimed was the proper course to pursue to ultimately reach the locality of the lost gold mine. For some days nothing of sufficient interest transpired to require special mention.

But one evening the tally-ho reached a mining camp called "One Horse Bend." The camp was one of the roughest and most lawless places in the West. But for all that Frank and his comrades decided to pass the night there.

As the tally-ho was advancing into the mining camp, Frank Reade's attention was attracted to a sign nailed to a tree which read thus:

NOTICE.

Warning are hereby duly given ter all Chinamen and niggers, not ter set foot in ther city o' One Hoss Bend, 'Cordin' ter ordinance by ther city council made an' approved, any Chinaman er nigger caught in this berg will be strung up, as a warnin' ter future arrivals o' ther same sort.

(Signed)

BANTY BRIGGS,
Mayor.

Frank Reade read this aloud.

Poor Pomp listened, and he looked rather troubled as he said:

"I specs dat done mean Pomp. I can't help it if I is brack, Mars Frank, an' I reckon I'se got a white heart. But I doan' want ter get friends in-ter trouble on my account, nohow. So I'll jist slip out an' hide in de woods til youse git ready ter leave dis place."

"No, begob! Faith, an' yez will do nothin' av the sort. Tare an' ouns! Be the powers, an' it's ashamed av yez I am! Shure an' it's yersel' an' the loikes av me has fought blackguards all over the worruld, an' yez don't mane to back away from a shindy at this time of loife? Shure, an' it's ould Barney as wull shtand by yez, Pomp, an' if the spalpeens hangs wan, they have got to hang both, an' that won't be no picnic for thim, begob!"

As Barney spoke a miner who stood before a saloon a few feet distant, caught sight of Pomp's black face.

"A nigger! A nigger!" he yelled, and a score of roughs poured out of the rum-hole and surged toward the tally-ho, shouting: "Hang the nigger! Hang the nigger!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BARRICADE IN THE PASS.

FRANK READE and his comrades understood that Pomp was in real danger. The rough and lawless element of "One Horse Bend" was clearly in the ascendancy. The crowd of men who issued from the grog-shop and raised the dread shout of Judge Lynch advocates, were evidently in dead earnest.

No idle menace, no simple threat, unsustained by direful purpose, was ever uttered in such tones as theirs.

Assuredly Pomp could scarcely anticipate, or hope for the least medium of mercy if he was once in the power of those howling ruffians of the mines.

No plea for leniency, no cry for clemency, no prayer for forbearance would avail, Frank and his comrades were convinced.

The evil of the nature of the ruffians was rendered more dangerous than, perhaps, otherwise might have been the case by reasons of potatoes long and deep. Inflamed as now by rum, the roughs of "One Horse Bend" were veritable wolves.

As was usually the case when strangers saw the electric tally-ho, the remarkable vehicle was now regarded as an ordinary stage coach, somewhat out of the common in design.

The roughs of One Horse Bend as yet had no idea of the real character of the conveyance, or that the noble steeds by which it was drawn were other than horses of flesh and blood.

One of the first men who came out of the rum-shop in answer to the yell of the miner who had first discovered Pomp, was a thick set, undersized ruffian whose ignoble features indicated a nature of the lowest description.

This individual was Banty Briggs—so called—the mayor of One Horse Bend, who had been elected by the toughs, who were in the majority.

"Hold on there with yer hearse, er I shill be compelled ter salivate ye, pilgrim!" shouted

Briggs, as he advanced toward the tally-ho at the head of his yelling mob of constituents.

Frank Reade, Barney and Yank Beckbridge were now on the top of the vehicle.

Pomp and the doctor, at a word from Frank, had retired inside the tally-ho as the miners rushed out of the grogshop.

Frank Reade occupied the driver's seat, and to him Banty Briggs addressed his order to stop the tally-ho.

The inventor now wore his suit of mail under his ordinary garments, having donned the same during the absence of Barney and Pomp, when the savage appeared in pursuit of Beckbridge and the captives he had rescued.

Barney had not as yet discarded his armor which he had worn when he appeared with Pomp among Sitting Bull's band as "a man of fire."

"I think," said Frank to Beckbridge, "that in this instance the easiest way out of a difficulty is the best one. We will not halt here, but continue right on."

One Horse Bend was located in a pass of the Montana mountains.

If Yank Beckbridge's interpretation of the old Indian map, or tracing, was to be relied upon, the route of the hunters in quest of the lost gold mine ran through the pass, so it was necessary to go through the mining camp, which was built in a straggling line, of rude shanties for a quarter of a mile along the defile.

Frank Reade did not heed the command of Banty Briggs to halt.

On the contrary, the young inventor depressed the main lever of the battery and increased the speed of the wonderful iron team.

The roughs uttered fresh yells of rage, and a volley of pistol shots were discharged from their midst.

Yank Beckbridge dropped down flat on the top of the coach, and the bullets did not hit him.

Frank and Barney were both struck, but not injured, thanks to their chain armor, which once again proved wholly impervious to bullets.

The roughs rushed pell-mell at the heads of the iron steeds and at the coach.

Several of the toughs were struck down and trampled, and the others sprang away. They had made the discovery that the horses were mechanical.

"Bears an' beavers! Horses made o' iron! Let somebody sing a hymn. I reckon ther world are a-comin' ter an end an' we're sent fer, an' have got to go!" bawled out a tattered, trampish looking rascal who was one of those who had received a blow from the iron-clad hoofs.

But the roughs who had come at the tally-ho had their own troubles. Banty Briggs had grabbed hold of one of the metal guards into which Frank had just sent a charge of electricity.

Several others imitated the example of their leader, and in about a second a heap of roughs were piled up in a struggling, kicking, swearing mass, and every one of them was ready to make oath that he had been struck by lightning.

The tally-ho kept on.

Thus far Frank, who did not wish to have anything done or said to provoke hostilities, had managed to keep Barney quiet.

But now the Irishman yelled in delight:

"Whoop! It's takin' av a tumble yez are, ye dirty blackguards. Faith, an' wan good mon loike mesel' could stand foreinst yez all wid a sprig av a shiek an' bate the heads av ye!"

"Surrender the nigger!" roared Banty Briggs, picking himself up and leading his gang in pursuit of the tally-ho.

"Put that little runt av a blackguard on ice an' kape him fur me! I come back. Sure, he's the missin' link, an' me friend P. T. B. is lookin' for him," retorted Barney.

The speed of the tally-ho was now excellent.

It bowled along through the mining camp right merrily.

Doors flew open and people rushed out to see the strange vehicle.

The yelling mob behind added to the excitement, and soon all the camp was aroused and there was a scene of great confusion.

Frank smiled with satisfaction, saying:

"We shall soon leave this delightful place, which is a land to Chinamen and negroes tabooed, far behind."

In a few moments more than two-thirds of the distance through the straggling mining camp was traversed by the tally-ho.

Then soon the last shanty in the suburbs of "One Horse Bend" was left behind, and the roughs of the camp who were still in the pursuit of the tally-ho did not gain on it.

At some distance beyond the mining camp the pass narrowed until it became only a cleft in the steep-walled mountains which towered on each side that was scarcely wide enough for a single wagon trail.

The electric tally-ho rounded a bend in the nar-

rowest part of the pass and then, all at once, Frank Reade uttered a startled exclamation, and quickly threw back the main lever, and thus disconnected the electric current with the machinery and so caused the team to stop.

Before him, completely closing the narrow pass and rendering it wholly out of the question to run the electric tally-ho further in that direction, was a rude but formidable barricade.

The obstruction was constructed entirely of large rocks and boulders. These were placed so as to form a wall ten feet high.

Frank, as well as Barney and Beckbridge, was very much surprised at the first sight of the barrier.

But a second glance served to occasion them additional astonishment, for, protruding through loop-holes rudely made in the high walls, they saw a row of eight rifle barrels.

There were men behind the rude fortification. Their voices were heard by Frank and his friends as the tally-ho was halted, and the succeeding moment an apparition appeared on the wall.

Frank Reade beheld a young girl of surpassing beauty, clad in a buckskin tunic and Indian leggings, and carrying a light repeating rifle.

"Friends or enemies, which are you?" demanded the wild mountain maid, laconically.

"Friends, certainly. Who could profess enmity to one so beautiful, fair maid! We are strangers on our way west. One of our party chanced to be a colored man, and the roughs of One Horse Bend are in pursuit of us vowing to hang the unoffending man of color. Is there no way by which we can pass your fortress, and why is it here?" said Frank, in a breath.

"The roughs of One Horse Bend have tried to wrest my father's claim from him because it is the richest lead in the gulch, and Banty Briggs has set up a fraudulent claim to it. We have barricaded the pass here, as it is the only route to my father's claim," said the girl.

At this moment the yells of the men of One Horse Bend were heard close behind.

"Begob, it's a ruction we'll have now, for sure!" cried Barney.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BARNEY AND POMP IN A GREAT "RUCTION."

"YOUNG lady, is there no way in which we can pass your barricade?" asked Frank.

"None—unless the rocks are removed for a space."

"You have men with you?"

"Certainly. Ten brave fellows who are employed by my father."

"Then I propose that they at once set to work to open a passage for the tally-ho."

"And so allow the men who are my father's foes and mine to capture us and our claim. No, no, self-preservation is the first law of nature. It cannot be, stranger."

"But I guarantee that if you will have an opening made for our passage the men of One Horse Bend shall not profit by it," replied Frank.

His quick brain had grasped an idea and he was ready to carry it out at once.

The maiden smiled incredulously.

"I am Frank Reade, Jr., the inventor, and I never promise more than I can perform," the young man added.

"You Frank Reade, Jr., of whom I have read so often?"

"Yes, miss. But quick, your answer. Will you open the way for the passage of my last great invention and trust to my solemn word that no harm shall come to you by reason of your so doing."

The girl hesitated.

But at that moment an aged, benevolent-looking miner appeared beside the mountain beauty on the rugged wall of the barricade.

"I answer for my daughter. We will open the barricade. I know Frank Reade's word can be depended on!" the old man cried.

Then he leaped down out of sight again, and Frank and his comrades heard him shout:

"To work, men! Down with the rocky wall and open a passage for Frank Reade, the great inventor!"

"Now, Barney, come with me!" cried Frank, leaping off the tally-ho.

"Sure, an' I'm wid ye, as the flea said till the poodle dog!" replied Barney.

Barney alighted beside Frank in a trice and the latter said, in a low tone:

"We have got to work a ruse."

Then to Beckbridge Frank gave some instructions, and he and Barney ran back to the bend in the pass.

They had barely reached it when Banty Briggs at the head of his band of roughs came tearing around the curve.

"Now!" cried Frank.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney.

With sudden leaps the inventor and his brave

Irish comrade darted upon Banty Briggs, and Frank dealt him a stunning blow which would have felled the stunted rascal to the earth had not Barney, in accordance with Frank's instructions, caught Briggs up bodily and bounded away with him to the tally-ho.

Frank followed closely. Beckbridge meanwhile had run out a wire from the electric battery to the side of the pass not more than twenty feet from the bend on the side of the trail toward the tally-ho.

Before the roughs behind Banty Briggs fully understood that their leader had been so to say snatched out of their midst and carried away, Barney had him safe in the tally-ho.

Frank Reade leaped on the top of the tally-ho and the doctor, Pomp and Barney instantly joined him there, and in a second's time four rifles in the hands of the defenders of the great electric invention were leveled at the roughs of One Horse Bend.

They halted, and a moment later Beckbridge was seen to dart across the trail between the miners' mob and the tally-ho, trailing a copper wire behind him.

He had given the wire a turn around a rock on the side of the pass whence he came. Now, in a moment more it was drawn taut about a foot from the ground and secured among the rocks, into which the old trapper had darted.

The attention of the roughs was entirely centered on the tally-ho. The light in the high mountain-walled defile was imperfect, and the mob did not see the slender wire stretched across the pass before them.

But one end of this wire was connected with the powerful battery in the tally-ho, and at that moment the subtle fluid of the lightning was traversing the whole length of the wire, invisible, but possessed of awful power.

The roughs halted at the sight of the rifles leveled at them from the top of the tally-ho, and meanwhile the men behind the barricade were working with a will to open the way for the passage of the tally-ho.

"Halt! We have your leader a captive, and if you come on you may fear the worst for him, and we shall give you a deadly volley," cried Frank Reade as the roughs stopped.

"Ye dassen't harm Banty. He's chief o' the vigilantes o' the gulch. Teeh a hair o' his head, an' ye'll all be hunted outen Montana er hung!" a burly desperado of the mines shouted back.

"I have warned you. Stand where you are, and when we have passed the barricade, and it has been replaced, Banty Briggs shall be surrendered to you," replied Frank.

"An' ye kin reckon yer mighty well off, fer we oughter skulp ther pizen varmint. We hed, by powder!" added Beckbridge, who had crept back to the tally-ho under cover of the shadows along the side of the pass, and who now vaulted upon the vehicle.

"Gollie, dat's so! Youse no 'count white trash am all howlin' ter git at one poor colored man. Dar am more dan forty ob yer, but yer all settin' at one. I see a nigger, but I hain't no coward like you uns, an' if dar am any two ob 'er gang what will give me a fair fight I'm dar meat. Yer hear my music-box, an' dat's de tune I see turned on, fo' suah!" cried Pomp.

"Down with the nigger! Hang the nig!" yelled the last speaker among the mob.

Then on they came in a mad rush for the electric tally-ho.

"Whoop! Is it dramin' I am, or hez Donnybrook broke loose right forninst me. Whoop, it's a shindy av illigant ruction at last we'll have!" cried Barney, now in his element, and brandishing his shillalah, the reckless fellow leaped off the top of the tally-ho.

Pomp was long suffering, and inclined to get away from the mob peacefully. But now his indignation carried him away. With a bellow like a mad bull he followed the foolhardy Barney.

But the succeeding moment the on-rushing roughs from the mining camp came in contact with the wire stretched across the pass, which they did not expect to encounter.

Then such yells of consternation as emanated from their lips were seldom heard before.

They received terrible electric shocks, and tripping over the wire the foremost ones fell head first.

Those immediately in the rear of the front ranks of the roughs tumbled over their fallen comrades, and they all presented a most ludicrous appearance.

Some began to scramble up as Barney and Pomp rushed at them.

Barney danced about whacking away at a head wherever he saw one, and Pomp butted right and left, knocking down man after man in quick succession.

"Whoop! whoop! Take that, ye spalpeen, an' that, ye blackguard! Shure, it's crackin' the heads av ye. I'm afther doin'!" shouted Barney.

"Gib de mean trash fits, Barney. I see done butted mo' dan a dozen out ob tune. Guess da'll let somebody else take de contract ter hang dis coon off dar han's!" cried Pomp.

But just then: "Ding! ding! ding?" sounded the electric bell, and turning, Barney and Pomp saw that the way for the electric tally-ho was opened through the barricade.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WAGON TRAIL—INDIAN "SIGN."

Pomp and Barney ran at once, straight for the tally-ho. Barney tried to dart by Pomp and, whether accidentally or otherwise, Pomp tripped the Irishman up.

Down went Barney sprawling. But he regained his feet with alacrity, and ran on after Pomp. But Barney was mad.

"Sure, and that's all a gentleman gits for helpin' av a nagur. Faith, an' I'll bate the head av the black rascal whin we git out av this shindy!" cried Barney.

He had bruised his knee and he limped a trifle, but for all that he boarded the tally-ho in a moment. Pomp was already inside the vehicle.

Frank Reade worked the electric levers. The machinery began to move, and presently the tally-ho glided onward through the opening in the rocky barricade, which was now complete.

The howling, deeply incensed ruffians of the mines, recovering somewhat from their discomfiture, uttered loud, exultant yells as they saw the barricade was open.

"Now we'll run old Walters out of his claim! Come on, boys! The biggest pay-streak in ther gulch are a-waitin' fer us!" shouted one of the roughs.

"An' I reckon it'll wait fer a long time!" retorted Beckbridge the trapper.

Meanwhile the doctor, so instructed to do by Frank, had got the repeating Winchester battery in place.

Frank halted the tally-ho just inside the barricade, and immediately the electric battery was discharged over the heads of the toughs of the mines. None of them were hit, for the inventor had no desire to needlessly sacrifice human life, and his intention was merely to intimidate.

The roughs recoiled at the detonation of the tremendous fusillade reverberated over their heads, and reechoed again and again through the pass.

Frank Reade's purpose was attained.

As the enemy fell back, he and Beckbridge seized Banty Briggs, and ran him to a great rock about three feet on the further side of the barricade. To the rock they bound the rough, and Beckbridge clambered to a perch among the boulders on the side of the pass.

There the trapper crouched down, with a projecting ledge for a breastwork, and leveled his rifle at the bound man. There had been an evident intention of the roughs to make a second rush to free Briggs while he was being secured to the rock.

But Barney shouted:

"Come on agin, ye blackguards, an' the next toime the battery goes off, be dad an' it's depressed it will be, and it will blow the likes av yez intil smithereens!"

"Yes, and if yer make a move to rush through the openin' in the barricade, I reckon old KILLSURE ull go off an' pop Mister Banty Briggs plumb center, by powder!" cried Beckbridge.

"To work, all hands! Repair the barricades!" cried Frank to a dozen honest-looking miners, who, with old man Walters, the owner of the disputed claim, were standing by the barricade.

"The cowardly curs who want to rob a fellow creature of his life simply because his skin is black, won't sacrifice their villainous leader. They understand that Banty Briggs will be shot down in his tracks if they attempt to come through the opening in the barricade," added Frank.

A cheer for Frank Reade went up from the honest miners, and the beautiful mountain maid regarded the young inventor with such admiring glances as any one of the miners would have given all they possessed to have won from her.

Frank had devised his whole plan on the spur of the moment. Ably seconded as he had been it had thus far succeeded.

The miners under old man Walters, as they familiarly designated the claim owner, set to work with a will to repair the breach in the barricade.

Banty Briggs had regained his senses, and his evil face was as pale as death.

He called out to his comrades:

"Stand back, fellers, I don't want ter go under on account er a nigger or a disputed claim. These fellers mean biz, an' I know it."

Reluctantly the roughs withdrew further.

The work of repairing the barricade was quickly completed. Then, when it was accomplished, Beckbridge was called in.

"Now, my friends, is your barricade as secure

as when we came?" asked Frank of the honest miners.

"It is! it is!" was the quick, unanimous response.

"Very good, then, I have made good my promise, and now we will say good-bye."

"I hope we shall meet again, Mr. Reade," said the old miner's beautiful daughter as she gave Frank her hand, while her eyes betokened the more than passing interest the inventor had awakened in her heart.

"I fear not, fair girl, unless you can some time find time to visit my wife in Readestown," replied Frank.

The girl's face flushed and then paled.

"We shall never meet again. It is better so," she said quietly, and then turned away.

Less than an hour later the tally-ho was beyond the range, and again traversing the prairie.

The trail of a wagon train was struck some twenty miles further on, and Beckbridge, who was gazing intently ahead, all at once laid his hand on Frank Reade's shoulder, and said:

"There's trouble ahead, fer the emigrant train that hez just passed this way. Ther tracks are about an hour old, I judge. There's redskins a-trailin' the train. I feel ther Injun load-stun in my natur a-workin', an' I know reds are plannin' for ter attack ther wagon train. Look yere. Just stop ther team a bit."

Frank halted the electric steeds.

Beckbridge leaped out and inspected the wagon trail. Presently he came back with a white handkerchief in his hand which he had picked up in the grass.

"Half a hundred Injuns mounted on ponies hev struck ther trail of ther emigrants near here, an' are now a follerin' it. I read ther signs like a book. Here's a wiper one o' ther whites must have dropped," said the trapper, and he placed the handkerchief in Frank's hand.

The young man's eyes instantly discovered a name in one corner of the lost handkerchief.

"Byron Porter! Heavens, my old school friend from Ohio is with that train! Some months since he went West, intending to purchase a ranch!" cried Frank, reading the name on the handkerchief.

"An' he's likely to lose his scalp!" said Beckbridge.

At that moment the distant report of a volley of rifle shots reverberated over the plains.

"We must go to the support of the emigrant train. Byron, the friend of my school-days must be saved!" cried Frank.

He was about to say more when the blood-curdling warwhoops of a large band of savages indistinctly reached his hearing.

Just as Frank threw back the electric lever and started the tally-ho there came the report of a pistol shot from inside of the coach, and Barney was heard to shout:

"Murder! It's kilt I am intirely!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TRAPPER'S SORROWS.

"I RECKON ther Irishman must hev shot himself, by powder!" exclaimed Beckbridge, the trapper, as Barney, from inside the coach, was heard to shout as he have stated.

"Murther! It's kilt I am intirely!"

Beckbridge opened the door in the top of the vehicle, and he saw Barney hopping about on one foot, while he held a smoking revolver in his hand.

"What's ther matter, Barney? I consait ye hev been makin' a target of yer underpinnin'," said the trapper.

"Yah, yah, yah! If I done had sich mighty big gunboats that I couldn't shot a shoot widout hittin' 'em I'd done sold 'em for mud-scows!" cried Pomp.

"Close that hatchway o' yez face, nagur, or begob, I'll be afther jumpin' down the throat av yez! Sure, yez know me gun wint off be accident an' barked the big toe av me."

"Yah, yah, yah!" laughed Pomp.

"Faith, an' if the nagur will hav' the illegant politeness to hold the intrance of the mammoth cave closed till we are on equal footin', sure, an' it's meself will bate the head av him. The nagur tripped me a bit ago, an' I hev the same in fur him yit, se I hev."

"Come, come, no quarrelling. We shall have fighting presently in plenty without getting up a row between ourselves I think," said Dr. Vaneyke. Again the distant yells of Indians were heard, and the indistinct report of firearms succeeded the outcry from afar.

"Eight ye are, by powder," assented the trapper, and Barney forgot the pain of his slightly wounded toe in the anticipation of a "ruction."

"Sure it's a regiment av the red nagurs thet mesei' an' me black-diamond pard kin get away wid. Eh, Pomp, me jewel?" he cried.

Pomp assented to Barney's gasconade, and as there was a prospect of a row with outsiders, the two ridiculous rascals became very friendly forthwith, and Pomp pulled off Barney's boot and bound up his toe.

All hands were presently on top of the tally-ho and looking ahead anxiously. From the moment when the discovery of the name on the handkerchief which Beckbridge had picked up, gave Frank the assurance that his quondam friend, Byron Porter, was in danger, he had caused the tally-ho to maintain a high rate of speed.

The air of the northern prairies is peculiarly rare, and sounds could be heard at a greater distance than elsewhere.

Although the emigrant train and the Indians were not yet in sight, the inventor relied upon the speed of his remarkable electric-vehicle to overtake them before it was too late to render the whites assistance.

At some distance ahead, in the direction whence the sounds of strife emanated, a ridge of the plains, such as occurs at intervals on the rolling prairie, could be seen.

Frank surmised that when the ridge was reached, the emigrant train and its red enemies would come in sight.

Preparations were hastily made for a battle as the tally-ho bowed swiftly along, and Beckbridge remarked:

"I reckon that 'tain't no use ter hope thet Santah, the pizen Sioux, are with the varmints that are arter ther wagon train, fer 'tain't possible. An' yit I'd gin half a season's trappin' ter git holt o' ther critter on account er them buckskin breeches o' mine what the red ran off in. Them was a keepsake—er token, them was, an' I sot store by 'em a heap. Ther Widder Kerridge down ter Fort Smith made fer me them buckskins."

The merry eyes of the eccentric old trapper twinkled, and he heaved a deep sigh and ejected a stream of tobacco juice that caused Pomp to dodge as it flew by his ear.

"Mistah Trapper, I reckon dat you done got de idee inside ob yer cranjum dat dis yere colored gemman am er cuspidor. Dat am a big mistake, sah, an' doan yer disremember it," said Pomp.

"It's absent-mindedness, nigger," replied Beckbridge, deftly throwing a huge quid of tobacco through the window, and causing Pomp to dodge again.

"Was yer ever in love? I consait yer was. Wall, when a feminine gits inter a feller's head, sense gits out, an' ther critter ain't 'sponsible. Ther widder are in old Yank's head, an' there's sorer inter the inside o' his heart on account o' ther loss o' them buckskin breeches."

The trapper sighed again dismally, and stowed away something less than a quarter of a pound of fine-cut in the side of his face by way of consolation.

"Yas," he resumed in ludicrously melancholy tones, "sich are the fac, Old Yank hez got ther trouble o' ther heart caused by a darter o' Mother Eve, and he's got it bad. 'Wear 'em, Yank,' said the widder, 'an' when ye wear 'em think o' me.'"

Beckbridge brought the stock of his rifle down with a sudden whack, and he added:

"An' ter think that a pizen red nagur are now a runnin' around in the widder's breeches—I mean my breeches. By powder, it's enough ter break ther old man's heart."

"The case is sad indeed," said Frank, laughing heartily as did the others.

"But I'll git them buckskin breeches back agin if it takes all summer. That ere I makes affidavit to. Why, 'spose I should come back ter ther widder without them buckskin breeches on—without her token of fection—I kin reckon on what would happen then. I'd lose ther widder, an' that long-legged, double-jointed, web-footed critter, Sam Sedges, ther post parson, would out me clean out."

"A melancholy prospect, surely. Certainly you must recover the buckskins," said Frank.

"Sartin. You kin put it down thet Santah sheds them 'ere buckskin breeches, and that Yank Beckbridge gits inside o' them agin afore he goes back ter the widder. There's color in her hair—she says it's auburn—an' you kin consait she's got a temper o' her own. 'Spose she should hear thet a pizen red was a-wearin' her—I mean my breeches. Broomsticks would be at a premium when I showed up at ther fort, I consait."

"Undoubtedly, friend Beckbridge, yours is a sad and romantic case. Quite a romance indeed, since the favor of your fair one depends upon the recovery of a pair of buckskin breeches worn by a murderous Sioux," said Frank solemnly.

"And how pathetic are the attendant circumstances and future possibilities! The combination of red hair and widow, broom-sticks and buckskin breeches suggest a touching fate for you, friend trapper," said the doctor.

"Touchin'! Touchin' ain't the word. Strikin'

'ud do better in connection with ther widder an' ther handle o' ther sweepin' implement afore mentioned," said Beckbridge.

"I stand corrected," assented the doctor, while Frank laughed, and Pomp and Barney fairly roared.

"Youse de funniest man I ever seed," said Pomp.

"Funny! Sho! you oughter knowed my uncle, Luther Beckbridge. I've knowed folks ter laugh themselves ter death at that feller. He was funnier than a funeral—a heap; but there was a guide book went 'long with my Uncle Luther's jokes, so's any one could find out where ther laugh came in."

"A wise provision. Other humorists might take a hint from your uncle," laughed the doctor.

"By the way," said Frank, "You have not as yet explained how you rescued Eve Eldridge and her mother from the Sioux so speedily."

"That was luck an' a heap on it, I consait. Yer see ther gals had managed ter give ther reds ther slip, an' 'ere a-runnin' fer dear life when I chanced ter meet 'em in ther hills. Then all we had to do was ter make for ther tally-ho. We did that an' I reckon 'tain't necessary fer me to gin you a history o' ther rest."

"Certainly not, since I witnessed what ensued."

"There's a heap o' trouble on ther old man's mind takin' one thing an' another. What with ther widder, ther lost gold mine, and ther worryment I've got about leetle Sunshine, I reckon old Yank has got sommat o' a load."

"True, true," Frank affirmed.

"The pizen scoundrel, Adam Marvan, may discover thet leetle Sunshine are in Helena, and seize her while old Yank ain't on hand to protect her. What a pizen fool my old pard Strathmore was to pledge his leetle gal as security fer the loan he got from Marvan."

"Yes, but Strathmore was sure of the value of his claim."

"That's just what I blame him fer. A feller hain't got no right to be sure o' anything 'cept trouble an' death in this vale o' tears. But I've got a presentment that ther pizen varmint, Brant Forges the half-breed outlaw, will make us more trouble yet. He won't give up the idee o' findin' the lost gold mine easy, an' he'll track me fer ter get the old Injun map like a starved wolf tracks a wounded buffer."

"Do not borrow trouble, friend Beckbridge. Surely we have left Brant Forges and Marvan well behind. I hope we shall see no more of them," said Frank cheerfully.

"Sartin I hope so to, pard. But suthin' seems ter say 'tain't so to be."

"Well, here we are at the ridge!" cried the doctor at that juncture.

"Yes, an' begob, there's the red nagurs an' the wagon train. It's a foine ruction we hev struck, as me brother Mike said whin he ran intil the free fight at Donnybrook," said Barney.

A thrilling picture was presented on the plains beyond.

CHAPTER XXVI.

POMP IN THE GREATEST PERIL YET.

HALF a mile or more distant from the ridge which the electric tally-ho had now arrived at Frank Reade and his comrades now saw a wagon train composed of a score of covered wagons, or "prairie schooners," as the canvas covered vehicles favored by emigrants are designated on the plains.

The train had evidently taken the alarm in time to make some preparations for the Indian attack.

The wagons had been drawn up in a circle with the poles locked in the rear axles so as to form a barricade within which the emigrants and their horses were sheltered.

The Sioux had already been engaged in an attack upon the train for about half an hour, although the time of the battle seemed much longer to the imperiled emigrants.

At the moment when the electric tally-ho arrived within sight of the wagon train the Indians to the number of forty-odd were circling about the wagon barricade at the full speed of their ponies, lying along the further side of their animals and discharging their weapons over their shaggy necks.

But there were several riderless ponies, telling that more than one of the murderous Sioux had fallen under the fire of the defenders of the train.

The latter were making a brave, intrepid defense, and the rattle of their discharged rifles made an almost continuous fusillade.

The redskins had already made one fierce united onset, but the charge was heroically repelled by the whites.

Sustained and inspired by the presence of loved ones, wives, children, and sweethearts, for whose

preservation they were battling, the emigrants made a grand fight.

The savages who were engaged in the attack upon the wagon train had not previously encountered the electric tally-ho, and sighting it presently they uttered delighted yells and bore down upon it.

For the nonce the wagon train was left in peace, while, feeling sure of the capture of the approaching coach, the Indians gave it all their attention.

When the occupants of the coach made their hasty preparations for a battle upon hearing the sounds of conflict ahead among other things that were attended to a small cannon was got out, put together, and set on the top of the tally-ho. The small cannon was provided with a revolving carriage so that it could be aimed in any desired direction.

The cannon had been duly loaded with an explosive shell, and now, while all the other members of the tally-ho force retired inside the vehicle, Pomp and Barney yet clad in their suits of mail, stationed themselves at the cannon which they had volunteered to man.

From inside the vehicle Frank still acted as engineer, and controlled the movements of the tally-ho.

The electric conveyance continued to advance in the direction of the imperiled wagon-train and the charging Indians.

The latter may have been somewhat surprised at this, and so a momentary hesitation on their part seemed to indicate. No doubt the Indians expected the supposed stage-coach to beat a hasty retreat.

Beckbridge had not as yet discarded his Indian disguise which he had secured from the treacherous Santah, and he now looked precisely like a Sioux warrior, paint, feathers and all.

The trapper and Dr. Vaneyke had their rifles leveled through the port-holes of the tally-ho, and while Frank Reade grasped the main electric lever with one hand the other held a revolver which rested in a port-hole.

Everything was in readiness give the Indians a warm reception.

All at once Barney depressed the cannon and took aim at a compact body of the mounted savages, who, although not as yet within rifle range, the Irishman judged to be within reach of the cannon.

Suddenly then a booming detonation was heard. The tally-ho shook severely as the cannon recoiled from the impetus of the discharge. The shell went hissing through the air, rising at first and then falling and exploding among the red raiders.

Consternation ensued among the Indians and on charged the tally-ho. In a moment it was among the savages rushing on in resistless might.

But, as a volley from the rifles inside the vehicle was discharged, the coach gave a sudden lurch.

One wheel had sunk in a prairie dog hole and the abrupt jolt pitched Pomp off the tally-ho right among the Indians.

The darky was stunned by his fall. Barney uttered a yell, and pulling a revolver from his belt with each hand, he blazed away at the savages around Pomp.

But with a loud, exultant yell, a huge warrior, who certainly must have possessed herculean strength, bent down from the back of his pony and clutching Pomp by the wool, lifted him upon his animal and dashed away.

"Help! Sabe me, Barney! Luff me go, Mister Injun! I ain't a white man, 'deed I ain't!" yelled Pomp.

But the Indian kept on and did not relax his hold upon Pomp.

"I done tole yer dat I ain't no white man. I se a Injun—a brack Injun, dat's what I is," roared Pomp, in desperation.

"Wah! Sioux take scalp!" was the far from reassuring rejoinder of Pomp's captor.

Beckbridge had drawn the sights of his rifle on the big Indian, but he feared to fire so great was the danger of hitting Pomp.

"Pomp must be saved! But how?" cried Frank Reade, in solicitous excitement, as he beheld Pomp being carried swiftly away.

"I've got the idee. I'll try a bit of a ruse which I consait may do good!" cried Beckbridge.

Then to the surprise of all he sprang out of the coach and started to run toward the Sioux who was making off with Pomp.

Frank Reade understood Beckbridge's purpose, and he wheeled the electric vehicle and pursued Beckbridge.

"Save me! I am Wahlatla, a great chief of the Southern Sioux. The white men took me captive several days ago!" shouted Beckbridge, in the Sioux dialect.

The big chief was deceived, for never did a disguised white man more nearly resemble an Indian.

Pomp's captor pulled up his horse. Beckbridge reached his side. The other Indians, terrified by

"the thunder gun," as they called the cannon, were in full flight.

Like a flash a pistol appeared in the trapper's hand. There was a flash and a report. The Indian fell from his pony. Pomp remained on the animal's back and clutched the reins.

The other Indians, seeing the huge savage who was, it chanced, their chief, fall, wheeled and came charging back, intent on vengeance.

Beckbridge bounded upon the back of the pony, and the succeeding moment the doubly laden animal was being urged at full speed toward the tally-ho, while behind it came the entire savage band, howling like mad.

The tally-ho was approaching at the same time.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MEXICAN HERDSMEN.

The tally-ho and the pony, ridden by Pomp and Beckbridge, the trapper, met in a moment or so, and the redskins in pursuit of the latter were yet a number of yards behind.

Pomp and Beckbridge threw themselves from the back of the pony and gained the interior of the vehicle the instant Frank stopped for them, as he immediately did.

Then Barney, who had swiftly loaded the cannon with another shell, sent it hurtling among the enemy, and they wheeled their ponies and fled, leaving several painted demons on the field, who would murder and rob no more white settlers.

"Now for the wagon train," cried Frank.

In a few moments more the tally-ho reached it, and there Frank found his old-time friend, Byron Porter, and the two were delighted at the meeting.

The Indians were seen hovering afar, but the wagon-train was in no further danger while the Frank Reade party and the electric tally-ho were with them.

The emigrants felt that the young inventor had thoroughly intimidated the hostile Sioux, and of course they understood that they were indebted to him, for their ammunition had been nearly used up when the tally-ho appeared, and they could not have held out long against the determined foe.

Frank's party listened with pleasure to the expressions of gratitude which the emigrants made, and then a consultation was held.

Frank agreed to guard the train for a day or so, until they had gotten out of the neighborhood of the hostiles and reached a mining town a day's march or so distant, where they could purchase a new supply of ammunition.

This was done, and there was no further adventure worthy of record for the time. The Indians did not make another attack, and, having left the train in safety, the search for the lost gold mine was continued.

Frank and his friends were glad that so many opportunities had come in their way to relieve imperiled white people and espouse the cause of right.

"Ah!" said the good doctor when the party was talking of their recent adventures, "it's a blessed thing to be able to help unfortunate fellow-creatures. What divine possibilities are crowded into this little span of sorrowing and cares we call a human life."

The evening of the day we are writing of the tally-ho arrived at a herder's camp.

In the summer ranchmen frequently send herds of cattle, under guard of some cowboys, to a long distance from the home ranch to find good pasturage.

The camp the tally-ho reached was composed of a dozen cowboys on this service. A large herd was resting near the camp. A cheerful fire blazed before two large army tents, and the herdsmen were about it. They had finished the evening meal of steak and coffee and hard bread, and were smoking their pipes and playing cards.

Frank Reade's coming with the tally-ho gave the herders a surprise, but they had heard of him and his inventions, and seemed glad to meet the celebrated young man, despite the fact that they were all Mexicans.

As Frank afterward learned, one Don Miguel Esteveado, a wealthy Mexican, had purchased an extensive Montana ranch of the United States Government, and these cowboys were the Mexican ranchero's men.

Our friends were not very favorably impressed with the appearance of the Mexicans, but they invited them to share their camp, and feeling well able to protect themselves in case of trouble, Frank and his comrades accepted the invitation.

But a short time after the arrival of Frank Reade and his party at the camp of the Mexicans, there was another arrival, or rather two arrivals, for a gray-haired old miner, evidently originally from one of the New England States, and a little girl of twelve, the old miner's daughter, rode up to the camp.

Frank saw at the first glance that the old miner was somewhat intoxicated. His first words were a further assurance of this.

"I'm old Jabe Peters from Placer Pocket, up in ther big sandy mountings, an' I've been ter ther post ter sell my dust, an' now I'm goin' back ter ther mines with my leetle gal Jule, an' I reckon ter buy the best claim in ther range, fer I've got ther rocks that talk when ye buy land!" announced the miner injudiciously, and he slapped his breeches pocket, causing a bag of coin to jingle musically.

Frank was watching the Mexicans, and he saw them exchange glances.

But they made the old miner welcome, and seemed at least to be the most hospitable people in the world.

Frank knew they had an ulterior design. He felt that those wild, lawless Mexican cowboys meant to transfer the miner's gold from his pocket to their own before they were through with him.

The young inventor's sympathies were with the indiscreet old miner, and he pitied his little daughter who seemed to fully realize the condition of her father, and to grieve because of her knowledge.

The Mexicans presently succeeded in inveigling the old miner into a game of cards, despite the fact that Frank tried as best he could without actually setting himself up openly to defeat the Mexicans, to prevent his playing.

Soon the half intoxicated old man was rapidly losing his hard earned gold.

His little daughter watched him in silence. Her face was pale, there were tears in her eyes, and several times she plucked the old man by the arm and whispered timidly:

"You promised mother you wouldn't play cards. You said you would bring all the money home to her. You know how badly she needs it. Oh, papa, do come away!"

Frank heard the child's words and so did Beckbridge. The two good hearts exchanged glances, and they understood each other.

The old miner pushed his child away and went on with his reckless play, staking his gold wildly.

Frank and Beckbridge both understood the game which was being played. They were sure that the old man was being shamefully cheated. All at once Frank saw one of the Mexicans draw a trump card out of his sleeve and substitute it for one which rightfully belonged to his hand.

Acting upon the impulse of honest indignation, Frank sprang forward and dashed half a dozen cards from the Mexican's sleeve as he shouted:

"Scoundrel, you are robbing this old man!"

In a second the dozen Mexicans were on their feet and Frank was surrounded.

"Kill the meddling Americano!" they shouted.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

VILLAINS UNMASKED.

FRANK READE'S impulsive exposure of the cheating Mexican gamblers was apparently destined to involve him and his friends in a desperate struggle.

The Mexican cowboys, who surrounded the young inventor, the moment the cards fell from the sleeve of their comrade, were deeply incensed. They resented the interference which bade fair to deprive them of the golden spoil the reckless old miner had brought to their net.

At heart, moreover, the national antipathy and hatred which the Mexicans have always entertained for Americans, caused the swarthy men from the land of the ancient Aztecs, to welcome an occasion which might excuse any hostile demonstration against the detested representatives of a nation which had once so completely conquered them.

The assumption of hospitality and friendliness which distinguished the demeanor of the Mexicans upon the arrival of Frank Reade and his electric tally-ho at their camp, was not a sincere demonstration.

The Mexicans would now gladly slaughter Frank Reade and his comrades with as little show of mercy as their vindictive ancestors massacred brave old Davy Crockett and his heroic adherents at that dreadful scene of heroes' doom, called "The Alamo."

The wild, swarthy cowboys from beyond the Rio Grande were descendants of the lower order of Mexicans, and the blood of the fierce brigands of Mexico who have been outlaws and insurgents ever flowed in their veins.

Now they caught eagerly at a possibility which promised plunder without punishment. They thought to estimate their ideas by their deeds—that they might massacre the entire American party on that remote prairie, and that the dark secret might never be revealed.

As the Mexicans leaped to their feet one of their number—a tall, saturnine fellow, with eyes that gleamed with savage light—struck down the old miner with a blow from the butt of his pistol, and made a sudden attempt to snatch away a pouch of

buckskin in which the miner carried his gold secured in his broad leather belt.

But the purpose of the Mexican was frustrated in a manner quite unexpected and surprising. The little daughter of the old miner was close beside her father when the cowardly Mexican struck him down.

She saw the robber's hand flash out to seize the gold she had sought to save for "mother," and, with a little gasping cry, the small heroine threw herself across the body of her father, upon the bag of gold, and the Mexican could not reach it.

Two-thirds of the original contents of the treasure bag yet remained intact. The baffled Mexican would have torn the child from off the body of her father, but something occurred just then and the Mexican went down all in a heap and did not stir.

When the Mexicans first leaped up and encircled Frank Reade uttering deadly threats, he was completely environed by his foes and separated from his friends.

Recognizing Frank Reade as the leader of the American party, the Mexicans were intent upon making him their first victim.

But to this the young inventor seriously objected. Life was very sweet to Frank Reade and he had never valued his existence higher than at that moment of supreme peril.

Many thoughts traversed his brain with swift flight, but the dominant idea was to turn the tide of peril—to act with promptitude which might enable him to singly defeat the murderous purpose of his assailants.

Frank was seldom at a loss how to act under any emergency, and now he struck out straight from the shoulder with clenched fists right and left and his well delivered blows dropped two of the onrushing Mexicans.

Then out came his derringers and two deadly tubes stared the Mexicans in the face as they rushed at him.

It was at that instant that the swarthy cowboy who sought to rob the old miner dropped all in a heap.

Frank's friends upon the instant made a rush.

Pomp reached the would-be robber first, and the cause of that enterprising gentleman's downfall was a butt in the stomach which knocked all the breath out of his body.

Barney and Beckbridge came close behind Pomp.

"Whoop! Shades av Donnybrook! crack the heads av the yellow nagurs! Sure an' it's a happy mon I am wid a nate little ruction on hand!" shouted the fight-loving son of Erin's green isle.

Barney had clubbed his gun, and he used it as a "sprig av a shillalah."

"Whoop! Take that for a kape-sake, an' that fer a love tap! Whoop!" cried Barney.

And right and left his gun crashed down upon the heads of the Mexicans, while Pomp butted, in his usual manner, and knocked out several of the swarthy villains in short order.

Beckbridge used his gun as a club too, and in much less time than is required to record the episode, the dozen Mexicans were "downed," as Barney expressed it.

"Gollie! I done bet free spring chickens, wid all the 'riginal springs in 'em, dat dem yer yellor niggers done s'pose dat a cyclone struck 'em!" cried Pomp.

"Arrah! an' it's a Cloneyclinty lad it takes to be after layin' out the Greasers!" said Barney, and then the ludicrous rascal flapped his arms like a rooster's wings and crowed lustily.

But unless they wished to engage in a further fight it was evident that our friends had best withdraw from the scene.

Frank Reade recognized this fact and he said:

"Come. Now we will get aboard the tally-ho and be off. Bring the old miner along, there's not an instant to spare. Beckbridge, you and Pomp keep the yellow rascals covered, and shoot the first one of them who attempts to arise," said Frank.

The trapper and Pomp leveled their weapons at the prostrate Mexicans. Then the old miner staggered to his feet, and Frank hurried him and his little daughter into the tally-ho.

The others then got aboard, Beckbridge and Pomp being the last to enter the vehicle. In a moment the tally-ho was under way.

Some of the Mexicans had already come to, but they did not get up at once for fear of a shot from the Americans.

The speed attained very quickly by the tally-ho soon carried our friends out of sight of the camp of the Mexican cowboys.

"What next, I wonder. Assuredly it seems to me we are destined to meet a constant succession of adventures," said Frank.

"True," assented the doctor. "But are you sure, Frank, that Beckbridge has read the old Indian map aright, and that we are really on the right trail to find the lost gold mine?"

"What's that. Hey! I read the Injun writin' correct? Well, doctor, I consait I hev'. But ther

Beckbridge family are a modest breed, an' they never brags none to speak on. Still I'll say now that if any two-legged critter, white er red, kin make out ther old Injun sign writin' that animile are Yank Beckbridge," said the trapper, overhearing the doctor's remark.

The good old man smiled.

"Have you taken into consideration the fact, friend Beckbridge, that the old Indian map of the location of the lost gold mine was made nearly a hundred years ago, and that the landmarks may have changed since then."

"I allow, doctor, that you can't change the mountings an' ther plains, 'less you go to work an' make the world over, which ther same a heap o' scientific chaps would like to do, thinkin' they could beat the Creator's hand-work, holler."

"But my friend, scientific research has established the fact beyond the shadow of a doubt, that volcanic action has taken place among the mountain ranges of Montana within less than a hundred years. We find the original red sand stone, the feldspar and the gneiss as well as the shale and granite formations displaced out of their order, as established by the law of geology, which is the science of creation."

"I consait that yer out o' my line when ye strike in on yer scientific jargon. Choctaw, Kioway, er Comanche palaver, I kin digest. But I draw ther line out ther 'ologies. They killed a brother o' mine. That feller went through 'em all ter college, an' he worked for a broker at eight dollars a week, an' found himself—when it didn't take a policeman ter do it fer him—on 'count o' booze—arter he graduated. Eddication wuz a great thing fer me brother, but, as I said, he finally broke down under it, and petered out."

Old Yank's merry eyes twinkled, but he heaved a deep sigh, and wiped his eyes on the sleeve of his Indian hunting-shirt.

Then squirt went a miniature Niagara of liquid tobacco from between his teeth, and Pomp exclaimed:

"Gollie! I see I'se got ter learn ter swim!" as he dodged.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A DISCUSSION—AN ELECTRIC MUSIC BOX.

"SERIOUSLY, I believe that topographical features of the mountain ranges of Montana have undergone great changes since the old Indian map was made," continued the doctor.

"Wall, it's possible. But I reckon that if ther changes ye consait hev gone on are sich as ter bother us, we'll find it out in due time, an' tain't no use to borry trouble."

"True. Then you are confident that thus far the course we have followed is correct."

"Sartin. But we'll hev a look at the map."

The trapper drew the buckskin bag, in which he carried the precious map, from the cover, and spread it out.

The bleached buckskin was discolored with age, but the unique drawing was legible still. Strange figures there were, men and horses and wild animals, and mountains and plains. But one line, doubly marked with arrows at regular distances, extended from one corner of the map diagonally to the other corner where the mountains were drawn.

Along this line there were rivers, plateaus, hills and valleys, and in Indian sign writing each principal land-mark was especially indicated.

Where the trail ended, and where therefore the trapper believed the lost gold mine to be situated, there was a land-mark, which if in existence at this date could scarcely escape discovery.

This land-mark was a tall mountain which lifted its head high above all the rival peaks of the surrounding range.

And the form of the mountain was distinctive, peculiar and remarkable for a natural formation.

The towering peak was almost a fac-simile of the pyramids of Egypt, and it was surrounded by a great rounded knob which suggested the idea of a gigantic head.

Yank Beckbridge with one bony finger traced his course along the line marked with the thickly strewn arrows.

"Ye see it's plain ter a blind man, who can't see when he's on beggin' duty, that this are our trail. Ye see here's the gulch which we passed where them fine nigger-hatin' hounds o' 'One Hoss Bend' made us a little diffikilty. An' here's ther pass where the barricade ther stopped us are. You recognize 'em?" said Yank.

"Yes," assented Dr. Vaneyke. "You are quite right. We are certainly on the right course."

"Correct, ther trail are all hunk, an' if we kin get to ther pyramid mounting we'll find ther mine."

"If the pyramid has not been destroyed by volcanic eruptions."

"Granted."

"And if we once find the mine we shall have no difficulty in taking possession of it, since all the gold mine Indians have perished."

"If there ain't nobody else in it the fight is off."

"Who could there be?"

"Prospectors wouldn't dare go there on account o' the redskins."

"Certainly."

"An' yet, doc, I hev an idee inter my brain chest that the lost mine ain't left without a guard."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I hev been cipherin' on that pint."

"Indeed! I wish you would explain. I cannot understand how you founded your problem."

"Jist as easy as fallin' off a log, doctor. You don't s'pose, I reckon, that them gold mine Injuns didn't hev no squaws, did ye?"

"Why, no!" assented the doctor, starting, while Frank Reade and the others, who were listening, suddenly evinced new interest in the conversation.

"Good. Was any o' ther gold mine Injuns killed?"

"No."

"Then where are they?"

"Gollie! dat's a conundrum," said Pomp.

"Shut up, nagur, an' let yer betters have some chance, afore I bate the head av ye," cried Barney.

"Silence!" admonished Frank Reade.

"Beckbridge, I comprehend your drift. You are an acute reasoner, far-sighted and keen. I admit that I committed an oversight in not taking into account the squaws of the dead gold mine Injuns," said the doctor.

"I consait ye did. Now, 'cordin' ter Injun natur ther squaws of the dead gold mine redskins are in possession o' ther mine. Ther warriors made ther home there, an' by powder, where ye find ther home of an Injun there ye find his squaws."

"Undoubtedly you are right. Granting that such is the fact, then, we may anticipate trouble."

"Yes. It's all right for old Getchewan ter give away the mine maybe, but you kin stake yer last pelt that ther squaws won't hev' it so."

"And they may prove real Amazons, and fight us like the female warriors of Ancient Europe."

"I so consait, an' that ain't all."

"No?"

"Sartin. Them gold mine squaws may git help. What's ter prevent 'em making a treaty with the Sioux? The Sioux would jump at ther chance ter fight fer ther red Amazons for a share of the gold mine."

"True enough, I see you have given all the contingencies thought."

"But as I said afore, we won't borrow trouble. That are ther only article o' domestic use the Beckbridge family never borrowed. Everything else, from a clean shirt ter a tooth brush, the Beckbridges allers depended on ther neighbors fer, but none on 'em ever took ter borrowing trouble, an' yit I reckon all ther neighbors would a been glad ter lend 'em some."

The old trapper looked reflective, and his feelings found vent. A stream of tobacco juice shot by Pomp's head, between the darky and Barney, so close that Pomp gave a jump and accidentally struck his head against Barney's.

"Bad seran ti! the loikes av ye! Is it taking advantage av an Irish gentleman whin his back is turned ye are after doin'?" Begob, an' I'll make a dead nagur av ye! Fat do we want wid a nagur anyway!" cried Barney, and he made a pass at Pomp.

"Well, if Ireland and Africa hez declared war, I consait that we hed better interfere an' pervent bloodshed!" said Beckbridge.

"Barney! Pomp! Subside! Do you hear me?" admonished Frank.

"He called me a thafe and a liar, an' he said I was no gentleman an' me mother kept a boardin'-house!" roared Barney.

"No, sah—no, sah! Dat's a copper-bottom lie, sah!"

"There will be an Irishman and a nigger afoot and alone on the plains presently," said Frank suggestively.

"But he tried to stab me, begob."

"Silence!" ordered Frank.

"The nagur has a razor up his sleeve."

Frank had to smile, and Barney subsided muttering.

"Ye see," resumed the trapper, "ter go back ter speak of the gold mine Injun squaws, I kin tell ye something about them. They are a fierce, ugly lot, and they are the finest race o' Injun women in the far West. Talk about handsome Injun women! Them gold mine squaws are rare beauties. Afore I met ther Widder Kerridge I had a hankerin' in that direction. Ther Injun loadstun in my natur drawed me toward 'em powerful, but ther widder changed ther magnet. But when I think o' them buckskin breeches—ah, me! This world are full o' sin an' sorrer. But I'll have 'em—I'll have 'em

off from that pizen Injun agin an' wear 'em back ter ther widder, er you kin plant old Yank fer keeps."

Just as the trapper thus spoke there was a sound of music in the tally-ho.

All turned and saw Barney turning the crank of a music box which he had taken out of the locker. This box was an electric toy which Frank had made for amusement.

The handle connected with an electric battery inside the box. When a concealed spring was touched the electricity went to the handle and caused the person who was turning it to hold on and turn faster and faster. Of course as long as the electricity was turned on the holder, or the player could not let go of the handle.

But Barney knew all about the contrivance.

CHAPTER XXX.

AT THE PRAIRIE TAVERN.

ALTHOUGH Barney understood the trick of the electric music-box Pomp did not, for it chanced Frank Reade had not explained its workings to the darky, and Barney, with a view to ultimately getting a joke on Pomp had taken good care to say nothing about the music-box to his comrade.

"Gollie!" cried Pomp, who was fond of music. "Gib us a breakdown an' I done show yer de real old Virginny barn-door fling!"

"Begob, an' I will, thin, if whin I'm through ye will play me 'The Wearing av the Green.'"

"Oh, dat's all right, I'll do dat. I spees anybody kin play dat crank-rigged pianer if da kin turn de crank."

"Course, Begob, a child could grind out the swate tunes wid his eyes shut," replied Barney, and he turned a screw and started the tune Pomp wanted.

Pomp made the best of the small space he had to dance in and he hoed down the favorite darky dance the best he knew how.

Then Barney surrendered the box to Pomp, turned on the tune "The Wearing of the Green," and sent the electricity to the handle by touching the concealed spring. But of course Barney waited until Pomp got well started at turning the crank before he turned on the electricity.

"Hi-yi! Fo' de good Lawd, I'se done cotched er cramp in my grappers! Luff go! Ki-yi! Took dat music-box away from me!" yelled Pomp, vainly trying to release his hold, while the electricity made him turn the crank faster and faster.

Barney just fell down and roared.

Never was "The Wearing of the Green" played so fast before.

Pomp knew at once that Barney had played a trick on him, and he was mad as mad could well be.

"Dat yere am a nice game fo' ter put up on er fren! Irish, I done make yer laugh annuder tune when dis ole music-box am done played out. You heah de tone ob dis coon's weice, I tell yer!" cried Pomp.

But Frank Reade touched the spring and released Pomp.

Then there would have been a fight between him and Barney in real earnest, for this time Pomp was in for it. But Frank interposed, and the trouble was prevented.

But Pomp vowed to get even with Barney yet.

That evening as the sun was setting beyond the eastern horizon, and a crimson glow reflected from the cloudless sky, bathed the vast prairie in warm, caressing tints, the travelers by tally-ho sighted a large double cabin in the distance.

The tally-ho was guided toward the remote, isolated structure, and when near it our travelers discovered a wagon train.

Yank Beckbridge was appealed to for information regarding the lone cabin and the wagon train.

The old trapper was familiar with all the trails and roads in Montana, and he replied at once:

"That there are the trail ter the Oregon line, an' ther double log cabin ye see beside it are old Barker's tavern. Ther old cuss ain't never molested by ther reds, an' there are them as says he stands in with 'em. His tavern is a handy place fer the Indians to buy whisky an' I consait that's why they are friendly to him. But ther tavern's got a bad name. They do say travelers hev stopped there that have never been seen or heard of since. But I reckon 'tain't so, fer there's only old Barker himself, who is bent nigh about double with rheumatiz, an' his lame son there 'sides the old woman, Barker's wife. 'Tain't no way likely a couple o' cripples and an' old woman kin git away with sich healthy pilgrims as allers travels this trail."

"Well, I've a desire to taste a change of diet, and so, friend Beckbridge, if you and Dr. Vaneyke are agreeable we will halt at Barker's tavern and have supper," said Frank.

"An' it's a drop av' the crature too it's mesel' as will have!" said Barney to Pomp in an undertone.

Dr. Vaneyke and Beckbridge assented to Frank's proposition, and so the tally-ho was stopped when the front of the log cabin was reached.

"So far, so good. Now we'll test the larder of this Hotel de Prairie," said Frank, lightly.

As the tally-ho stopped, a thick-set, broad shouldered old man, who was bent nearly double and who hobbled with a cane, came out of the prairie tavern. He was followed by a powerfully built young fellow, one of whose legs was doubled up as though he had a stiff knee and who walked with a crutch. An aged, hag-like old woman appeared in the door, and so the travelers saw the whole family of the lone tavern at once.

"We want to get supper. Can you accommodate us?" called out Frank.

"Yes," screeched the old woman. "Fine antelope steak, corn-bread, and good coffee is ther sort o' grub as Mother Barker sets afore ther pilgrims."

"Good enough too. We will partake," said Frank, and then old man Barker and his son, whom he called "Hank," expressed their surprise and admiration at the electric conveyance. Old Barker seemed very intelligent and he cunningly flattered Frank, and seemed so curious and interested that with pardonable pride the young inventor took pleasure in explaining everything about the tally-ho to him.

The old fellow asked dozens of questions, and when at last supper was announced old Barker understood the whole theory of the great invention and all about how to work it.

For once Frank had been a trifle indiscreet with his confidence, it seemed possible, for there was a cunning gleam of satisfaction in old Barker's eyes when he went into the inn to supper with Frank.

Meanwhile the lame young man called Hank had gone into the bar with the others of Frank's party, and Barney and Pomp had "cut the dust out of their throats," as Pomp expressed it, several times.

The party was soon seated around the supper table doing ample justice to the excellent antelope steak and corn bread. The coffee was voted particularly good and all drank it.

But suddenly Frank experienced a strange sensation of numbness about the brain, and he fell heavily upon the floor, sliding like an inert body from his chair insensible.

Within three minutes Barney and Pomp had also fallen insensible from their chairs. The doctor and Beckbridge knew what was taking place, but their brains were benumbed, and they could not stir.

The doctor managed to gasp, however:

"What can this mean?"

"We're drugged!" answered Beckbridge, as the doctor was overcome and slid to the floor.

The trapper realized that he and his comrades were in a death-trap, and he fought against the influence of the drug with all the power of his strong will. But he, too, slid to the floor. Still he did not entirely lose consciousness.

He saw a sudden transformation take place in the appearance of the old man Barker and his son. The former straightened up. The latter threw away his crutches.

"Now to plunder the tally-ho and run it over the ledge into Cheyenne canyon," hissed old Barker.

CHAPTER XXXI.

YANK BECKBRIDGE TO THE FORE.

YANK BECKBRIDGE'S career had often led him into peril. As a border man, a plainsman, trapper and Indian scout, at different periods of his life he had been compelled to face great dangers, and, so to say, look death in the face.

But never, in all the course of his varied and thrilling experiences, had the brave man found himself in any situation which equaled the present circumstances, in point of absolute, material, horror.

To meet peril when in possession of one's strength and with the senses in a normal condition, may be sufficiently trying, but to confront deadly danger enthralled by the power of a subtle agent, which steals away the strength and holds all the attributes of one's nature, which are most essential to the preservation of life, is terrible past the power of adequate description.

And such was now the condition of the trapper. Yank Beckbridge knew all that transpired, and yet he was powerless. Every nerve and muscle of his stalwart frame was enthralled.

Fortunately the trapper had drunk less of the drugged beverage than any one of his comrades. He was the last one served with the coffee, and he had only sipped a few swallows of it.

To this circumstance Beckbridge was undoubtedly indebted for his partial immunity from the influence of the drug.

That he was apparently under the spell was a circumstance to which he now owed his life. Had the treacherous, pretended cripples of the prairie tavern once suspected that the trapper was taking

cognizance of all they did and said, and that he had penetrated the subterfuge of their assumed infirmity the assassins would have hastened to put him to death.

This Beckbridge fully realized, and he almost closed his eyes while he watched and waited as he fought his fierce will-battle against the insidious power of the drug which now permeated his system.

Mentally Beckbridge vowed he would conquer the mysterious power that was striving to drag him down to unconsciousness. He saw his friends and comrades at the mercy of the treacherous enemy, and he understood that they and the great invention upon which he depended to find the lost gold mine was in awful danger.

Yank Beckbridge felt that he was the one obstacle which might yet, by divine mercy, be permitted to interpose between his friends and the cruel fate, in the persons of their treacherous hosts, which menaced them so nearly.

Old Barker and his son Hank stood with the hag-like woman of the tavern glaring at the recumbent forms of their victims in hideous satisfaction.

"It's our game, Hanky, meson. We hev' trapped the hull outfit sartin sure," said the old woman, exultantly.

"An' how neat an' slick an' simple I got all ther information I wanted out of that cute Yankee inventor. I reckon old Jerry Barker kin run that outlandish lectric hearse all right, an' onot it are dashed 'o pieces at the bottom o' Cheyenne canyon, then who'll know what became on it?" said the old man.

"Correct, father. We'll plunder the coach, an' then dispose of it as you've said. These here pilgrims carry good money on them, to say nothing of gold watches and the like. When we hev run ther coach inter ther canyon we'll go through 'em, and drop them in the usual place," assented the son.

"Make haste with ye, then. Don't yer recollect nothin'? Hev ye forgot suthin'? Didn't ye tell me ye met Red Wolf up the range ter-day, an' that he said he and his band o' Sioux would be here arter ther supply o' fire-water this sundown?" said the old woman.

"That's so. Come along, Hanky. The reds must not know about our haul, or they will demand a share of the plunder. Let's get this job over with before the Injuns come," assented the old man.

"Right you are, dad. Come along. Mother, you run the ranch while we are gone. If Red Wolf comes before we return let him have his grog, and don't be stingy with it nuther," said Hank.

"Trust yer old mother for anything, Hanky, meson," piped the hag shrilly.

Then the old man and Hank hurried out of the house.

But a moment later Hank returned.

"Well, sonny, what's up now?" demanded the mother.

"Nothing, only dad says you better lock up the dining-room and fasten the window blinds so that if the reds do come fore we get back they can't by any chance stumble onto our guests."

"Good idee, Hanky. There's suthin' in yer old dad's head 'side live critters," piped the old creature. "I'll do just as paw says."

Hank hurried out again, and the old woman proceeded to execute the will of old Barker, her husband, without delay.

She first closed the heavy, solid, wooden blinds over the two windows of the dining-room and fastened them on the inside with a hook.

Then she passed out of the kitchen-door and fastened it behind her.

Beckbridge heard her go along a hall to a door that led to the bar from the dining-room, and the sounds of bolt and lock told him she had quickly secured it.

All this time Beckbridge had felt a gradual improvement in his symptoms.

There was a hope in his heart now.

He tried his strength as soon as the old woman departed.

Much to his joy the trapper regained his feet and staggered to a sideboard on which there stood a bottle of whisky of which he had seen the old woman drink. He concluded the liquor was all right, and so he drank deeply.

The whisky certainly acted as an excellent antidote for the drug which Beckbridge had taken. The trapper felt like himself once more in a few moments.

He had listened anxiously ever since the old landlord and his son left the tavern, for the sound of wheels, but he had heard nothing to indicate that they had started the tally-ho.

Beckbridge hoped that, after all, the old tavern-keeper might not be able to get the electric vehicle under way.

The trapper knew that every moment was priceless. He saw that Frank Reade and the others were yet held by the mysterious thralldom of the

drug. He knew he could not revive them then, and that he must instantly direct his efforts to save the tally-ho.

The trapper silently opened the window nearest him, removed the fastening of the shutter, and pushed it aside.

Then he noiselessly leaped out.

In his hand Beckbridge carried his rifle, and his belt-weapons were in their place.

"Now fer ther tally-ho an' ter give them rascals a surprise. By powder, they are wuss nor ther pizen redskins," muttered Beckbridge.

He glided to the corner of the house, for he had made his exit in the rear of it and peered around it. He saw the tally-ho yet standing where it had been left. The rascals had not yet got it started, but Yank could hear them inside of it.

He glided forward.

But at that very moment the tally-ho started and the old woman came to the front door. Beckbridge knew that if he rushed for the tally-ho then, the old woman would shout an alarm and his purpose would be defeated.

He asked himself what was to be done, and he glanced along a plain trail which the tally-ho was being guided along.

At some distance was a clump of timber through which the trail passed. Yank took a sudden resolution. He glided along back of the house where the grass was tall, and under cover of it he sped to the timber.

He arrived in the cover ahead of the tally-ho. Presently it came along. Yank allowed it to pass. Then he crept out and managed to gain the top of the vehicle by climbing up over the "boot" in the rear.

Old Barker and his son were inside. Silently, Beckbridge pushed aside the sliding door and leveled his brace of revolvers. The weapons covered the rascally father and son whose backs were turned.

As yet they had not the slightest suspicion that anything might occur to foil their dread purpose. But suddenly Beckbridge's voice rang out as stern as fate:

"Hands up, ye pizen, white Injuns!" ordered the trapper.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SIOUX AT THE PRAIRIE TAVERN.

THE consternation and surprise of the old tavern-keeper and his hopeful son may be imagined when, as they turned like a flash, upon hearing the voice of the trapper, they beheld a pair of derringers leveled full at their hearts.

Their faces paled and they did not hesitate for an instant about obeying the command Beckbridge had uttered.

Up went the hands of the two rascals at once.

"Slow an' easy, varmints, slow an' easy. You hev had yer innings an' now it's ther time fer our side. Old Judas, jist you stop ther caravan right yere afore I drop ye in yer tracks. Quick," said Beckbridge sternly.

Old Barker turned quickly to the main lever, the use of which Frank Reade had unsuspectingly acquainted him with, and immediately stopped the vehicle.

He knew that any attempt to draw a weapon would seal his own doom and so he made no such effort.

When the tally-ho stopped the trapper dropped down into it. Then Hank Barker sprang at him. The trapper's right hand derringer exploded, but the bullet sped over Hank's shoulder and struck the old man, who uttered a yell and fell heavily.

Hank Barker was a powerful fellow, and he now strove to overcome the old trapper.

A desperate hand to hand struggle ensued between them in the tally-ho.

They surged this way and that, pulling, pushing, striving fiercely for the mastery until Beckbridge, who had been compelled to drop his weapons, found himself within reach of the lever board where the several levers controlling the electricity were placed.

Suddenly Beckbridge put forth all his great strength and swung Hank Barker against a steel guard-rail, and at the same moment precisely he depressed a small lever and sent a terrific current of electricity to the steel rod.

The shock which Hank Barker received was very severe. He uttered an awful yell and fell senseless. It was as though he had suddenly been stricken by a thunderbolt.

Beckbridge drew a deep breath.

"So far, so good. Now, ter bind these two varmints and leave 'em where they won't bother me none while I'm a-gettin' Frank Reade and the others out o' diffikilty. I s'pose I oughter skulp ther pizen reptiles, but I reckon I won't," he muttered.

The trapper secured the hands and feet of the murderous landlord and his son, and then he

dragged them both out of the tally-ho and left them in a thicket beside the trail.

This accomplished Beckbridge entered the tally-ho again, and, having turned the vehicle, he applied the electricity and sent it on its way back to the prairie tavern.

The trapper halted the tally-ho in front of the prairie inn as soon as he arrived there.

Scarcely had the vehicle stopped when out came Mother Barker.

Beckbridge was inside the tally-ho and the old woman was unable to see him.

The trapper had a plan in mind to get the old woman out of the way for the time, and he had run a wire from the battery to the handle of the door of the tally-ho, on the side of the vehicle toward the tavern.

As the old woman came rushing out of the inn Beckbridge called out, imitating old Barker's wheezy voice.

"Come yere, old woman!"

"What brung ye back?" demanded the old creature, as she hastened to the tally-ho and grasped the handle to open the door.

Then Beckbridge turned on the electricity.

It sped along the wire and the old woman tumbled over backward, uttering a scream of pain and anger.

Beckbridge leaped out, knotted a rope about the old creature so as to secure her and threw her under the porch of the cabin-like structure which served as the inn.

"Traps and trappers, I reckon the tables are turned, and I consait I shall git Frank Reade an' ther rest outen this diffikilty arter all," said Beckbridge exultantly.

Then he ran into the house, and opening the door of the dining-room, he saw all his friends.

But they were not as he had left them.

Frank Reade was sitting up staring about him blankly, Barney had also partially recovered.

Pomp was still insensible.

The doctor also exhibited no signs of recovery.

Beckbridge seized the whisky bottle from the sideboard and gave Frank Reade a drink. Then he passed the flask to Barney. Both Frank and the Irishman drank eagerly. The liquor had the same desirable effect on them as it previously had on the trapper. In a moment or so they regained all their faculties and were on their feet.

In a few words Beckbridge explained all that had transpired, and Frank Reade shuddered as he understood how close he had come to the hour of doom. Even Barney was impressed.

But his rage burst out presently.

"Be gorra, an' I'll bate the heads av the two murtherin' min. It's not cripples they were at all at all, do ye say? Well, begob, it's cripples they'll be whin the likes av me laves them. Where are they? Show me the blackguards?" cried Barney.

"Ther pizen varmint's are layed out. They won't give us no more trouble, I reckon. I consait we had better git out o' here, quick though, fer ther pizen critters expect their redskin friends, ther Sioux, ter come here this night, as I heard 'em say when they thought they had put me to sleep."

"Right yez are, begob. Shure an' yez are a mon after me own heart. It's a petty yez ain't an Irishman. What an illegit bit av a ruction yez had wid the blackguard. But give me the flask till I fetch Pomp to; the docthor is gettin' waked up," said Barney.

Just then the doctor groaned and struggled up to a sitting position.

Some few moments later, both the doctor and Pomp were fully revived.

"Now, to get away from here before the arrival of the expected Indians," said Frank Reade.

Hestarted for the door, and the others were about to follow him, when suddenly the young inventor paused, and exclaimed:

"Hark! what was that? I thought I heard the sound of a human voice under my feet."

Silence fell upon the party at once, and all listened intently.

Then a faint voice, which seemed to emanate from under the floor, was heard by all.

"For God's sake, save me!" murmured the voice.

"As I live, there is a prisoner in the cellar of this den of horrors!" exclaimed Frank Reade.

"Thin, begob, Barney O'Shea is the man to rescue him. An Irishman niver yet dersted a fellow creature in distress, an' so here goes for the cellar," cried Barney.

"Ise wid yer, Irish," said Pomp.

"Certainly, we must pause to liberate the captive, if such there is," said Frank Reade.

"While Barney and Pomp descend to the cellar, we three will remain to look to the safety of the tally-ho, lest the expected Indians should suddenly arrive," he added to Beckbridge and the doctor.

Then the Irishman and the darky ran out into a passage, found the cellar door and started down

the stairs. Frank and the others went to the outside door, but at that moment a chorus of fierce Sioux war-whoops rang out.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BARNEY AND POMP LEAP FOR LIFE—STRANGE RIDERS ON THE TRAIL.

STEALTHILY the Indians had approached the lonely prairie tavern. The crafty red warriors had sighted the tally-ho from afar, and they had concluded that it was a stage-coach, and that it would be right in their regular line of business to rob it and murder the travelers with the vehicle.

The Sioux band was that of Red Wolf, one of the most dreaded sub-chiefs of the great Indian nation to which he belonged. These were the Indians whose arrival had been anticipated.

There was a secret treaty between the Indians and old Barker, else the lonely prairie tavern could never have existed.

The landlord had agreed to sell the savages whisky at a rate much lower than that charged them by the regular whisky traders, and in return for this benefaction the Indians were friendly to Barker.

Red Wolf's band numbered forty odd warriors. They were all well mounted on sturdy mustangs and all carried fire-arms.

A formidable force, indeed, was this band of red marauders, and at the sight of them Frank Reade and his comrades felt that a battle was inevitable.

When the travelers reached the outer door of the prairie inn and discovered the Indians, they were very close and dashing for the tally-ho at the full speed of their ponies.

"We must reach the tally-ho ahead of the Indians!" cried Frank, and he shouted:

"Barney! Pomp! The Indians are upon us. Hasten! Hasten!"

Then he and the trapper and Dr. Vaneyke ran for the tally-ho.

They reached it ahead of the Indians, but only had a moment to spare.

Then the Indians were within range.

The savages adopted their usual method of attack which has often been described, and began riding in a circle around the tally-ho, discharging their weapons at the vehicle in a volley as they went.

A veritable maelstrom of savage beings whirled and eddied around the tally-ho.

The moment Frank Reade and his comrades gained the interior of the vehicle, they seized their weapons and discharged a volley through the port-holes at the Sioux.

"If Barney and Pomp were only with us," said the doctor, in tones of deep regret.

"Yes. In that case I could start on and the speed of the tally-ho would soon enable us to leave our red enemies behind," replied Frank.

"But we cannot desert our friend," continued the good doctor.

"No. That is not to be thought of."

"If ther pizen varmint's diskliver that ther Irishman an' ther nigger are in the tavern, they are registered fer skulpin'. They are, I consait, by powder," said Beckbridge.

At that instant the voice of the hag-like old woman of the inn was heard.

She yelled to the redskins.

"Come, Red Wolf, help me! Git me out from under the porch. Help! Help!"

In some surprise, as his looks told, the Sioux chief rushed his pony up to the porch, threw himself off his animal and pulled the old woman out from under the porch.

"Ugh! White squaw heap tied. Who do?" said the Sioux, drawing his scapling-knife and cutting the cords that bound the beldame.

"Ther critters o' ther coach o' iron, an' there's two on 'em inside the tavern now a-waitin' to hev their hair lifted!" cried the old woman.

A dozen savages heard this, and with loud, fierce, exultant yells, they bounded for the door of the tavern, dashed it open, and leaped inside like a pack of wolves on the trail of blood.

Frank Reade shuddered, the doctor uttered an exclamation indicative of his fears for Pomp and Barney.

But a moment or so elapsed, and then through a door in the roof of the log tavern appeared the head and shoulders of Barney.

The Irishman gave Frank and his friends a pantomimic signal, which was understood. The young inventor began to work the levers governing the electricity, while the others discharged shot after shot at the Indians, who began to discover that they had attacked no ordinary stage-coach.

Frank Reade's manipulation of the electric levers sent the motive power from the battery to the machinery of his invention. The vehicle was turned and headed so as to run close by the side of the solitary tavern.

Then through the door in the roof leaped Bar-

ney, and Pomp followed. The two sped along the ridge-pole to the end which the tally-ho would pass. The tavern was only one story high with a low attic. The top of the tally-ho would be but a few feet below the roof presently. The purpose of Barney and Pomp was understood by Frank and his comrades. That the two brave fellows meant to leap from the roof of the tavern upon the top of the tally-ho when the vehicle passed was plain.

The Indians' attention being turned to the tally-ho they failed to discover Pomp and Barney when they first appeared on the roof.

But just as they were about to leap for the tally-ho which was now slowly passing the end of the cabin, the savages saw the brave pair.

They set up a loud yell, and a score of weapons were leveled at the escaping men. But Barney and Pomp leaped as the savages fired at them, and they escaped the shower of bullets that whistled over the roof.

The two jolly comrades alighted safely on the top of the tally-ho, and then it sped away.

Barney and Pomp dropped into the interior of the vehicle through the door in the roof.

"Where is the captive?" asked Frank.

"Dead, sure. Faith, and we found a white man chained in the cellar, but he was almost dead of starvation, and the excitement of promised rescue made the likes av him faint, an' the furst thing we knew he was dead, and so we left him," replied Barney.

An hour later the Indians had been left behind for more than half that time. They had pursued the tally-ho in vain.

But there was more trouble ahead.

All at once as the tally-ho was entering a timbered bottom land, near a water course, through which a narrow way had been cut, a stern voice rang out ahead, shouting:

"Halt!"

The succeeding moment a file of strange, weird riders all mounted on jet black horses, rode out of the timber and ranged themselves across the narrow trail.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A STRANGE PROPOSITION FROM A STRANGE SOURCE.

FOR some length of time previously to the date of this record the officers in command of United States regulars, quartered at the several forts in Montana on garrison service, had been annoyed beyond all precedent by desertion. The gold fever had smitten the men who had hired themselves out to stand up and be shot at for the munificent stipend of thirteen and a half dollars a month.

Almost daily deserters had fled from the forts and set out for the mountains, where new discoveries had recently been made in the way of gold "finds" of surpassing richness.

Fort Shaw, at the base of the Northern Montana range, as the government post nearest the scene of the new mining operations, had suffered most by reason of desertion.

For some time rumors had been received that the deserters, who were diligently hunted and arrested, and returned to the fort when found, had established a camp in the mountains composed exclusively of runaway soldiers.

Emigrants told startling stories of a band of strange weird riders, clothed in soldiers' uniform, whose bodies were surmounted by the heads of wolves, who had stopped and robbed them on the way to the mines.

These reports had been confirmed by prospectors and Indian traders, and Frank Reade and his friends had heard the reports of the doings of "the wolf soldiers of the mountains," as the deserters' band was called.

As soon, therefore, as the occupants of the electric tally-ho beheld the file of strange looking riders who suddenly appeared before them on the narrow trail leading through the belt of timber, they believed they had encountered the deserters, for every rider was clad in the United States blue, and wore the skin of a wolf's head as a mask.

Strange, grotesque and startling was the appearance of the singularly attired party, and at sight of them Barney exclaimed:

"Worra! me soull! But look at the wolves wid the bodies av min. Faith, an' it's a party av divils we hev struck now, I am afther thinkin'!"

"They are varmint's who mean to give us trouble, but they are only the runaway soldiers we hev heard on, I reckon," Beckbridge enunciated.

"Gollie, dar am 'bout twenty of dem, I 'specs," put in Pomp.

The leader of the strange band, who had ordered the electric tally-ho to halt, repeated his command as the vehicle came on, and no attention was paid to his order.

"Those rascals shall find out they are not simply 'holding up' a stage coach," said Frank Reade, sternly.

"I reckon I better, jist by the way of a bit of a

hint, put a small ventilator in one of their skulls," suggested Beckbridge, raising his rifle.

"No, it is not necessary. We can speed through their ranks, and if they fire a volley, their bullets cannot penetrate the metal plating of the tally-ho," objected Frank.

"Just as you say. But I'd just like fer to gin um one good volley ter wake 'em up," replied Beckbridge.

But it seemed that the motive of the deserters was not yet rightly comprehended by the party of the electric tally-ho; for, seeing that no attention was paid to his second command to halt, the leader of the deserters ordered his men aside.

They fell back, and then the leader called out:

"I know you! Frank Reade, the great inventor, and a party of comrades are inside the electric tally-ho. We would be friendly, and I have a communication of the greatest importance to make to Frank Reade. If you will stop I will advance alone and reveal a great secret."

"What do you think, doctor? It seems to me we might as well hear what the fellow has to say," Frank remarked.

"Yes, it can certainly do no harm," assented the old scientist.

Then Frank depressed and reversed the necessary levers until the speed of the tally-ho was gradually diminished, and the vehicle was finally at a stand-still.

Then said Frank to the leader of the deserters: "Now advance alone and I will hear what you have to say."

The man addressed rode forward to the door of the tally-ho, Frank opened it and the deserter saw him.

"I will make my business known in as few words as possible," said the latter. "Me an' me pardners have lately been on the trail of a couple of handsome Injun squaws who came to a trading post a few days ago to sell some gold."

Frank Reade started as the fellow mentioned the handsome Indian women and gold. But the deserter seemed not to observe the emotion of the inventor and he went on:

"We meant to find out where them squaws got their gold and I reckon we have."

Again Frank Reade gave a violent start. The possibility that the deserters had forestalled him, and discovered the lost gold mine and seized the same, seemed likely to be the next revelation he was to hear.

Little wonder was it that Frank and his comrades as well were suspensefully interested.

"Yes," the deserter went on, "we have tracked them two squaws to their entrance of a cave in the mountains that warn't never made by *natur*. Their fact are we have run the Injun squaws to the entrance of an old mine. I'll stake my life."

"Well?" pronounced Frank interrogatively.

"But at their mouth of the mine or cave or what not we are stopped. Ther squaws are Blackfeet Injuns, but they hev got a small army of Sioux warriors on guard at the mouth of the mine, if such it are. It's a mighty queer thing fer Sioux and Blackfeet to jine hands, but in this case it has been done."

"To what does all this tend?" asked Frank, as the deserter paused.

"We want you to go in pardners with us. With your machine ca' wheels and all your electric fixings you can scare or drive off the reds and help us seize the mine. We'll give you one-fifth share of all the gold we find."

"Thanks. But we must decline your offer, as we have reason to believe the mine you speak of is the property of one of our comrades, and instead of one-fifth we shall probably take all the gold in the old mine," replied Frank.

The deserter uttered a howl of rage.

"Bet yer life you won't take that gold. You are an infernal Yankee, graspin' ter rob yer betters, cuss ye. You are a shark, a pirate, a gold hyena, a sneak ter get at my secret and then set down on me this away," fairly bellowed the irate deserter.

"Hold on, there, you hev called names enough," said Beckbridge sternly, as he raised his rifle. The deserter dodged so suddenly that his wolf's head disguise fell off, and the red and bloated face of a villainous looking rascal was revealed.

"You old Injun eater, what yer mean by liftin' yer gun on me?" cried the deserter, addressing Yank Beckbridge. "You're a—"

The fellow's words were suddenly choked off in a most novel and ridiculous way.

Yank suddenly popped a huge quid of tobacco from between his own jaws and with a skillful toss threw the quarter of a pound of "cud" down the throat of the insulting bully as he opened wide his capacious mouth.

The rascal tried to order his men to charge on the electric coach, but he sputtered and strangled so that he could not utter a word.

Barney and Pomp roared.

"Begob, an' it's a nate way to stop the jaw av a blackguard, so it is. But, faith, an' it's a rope in-

stead av a quid av tobacco that ought to be chockin' the loikes av the crature!" cried Barney.

"Gollied! I se—"

Pomp cut short his speech, as he was compelled to dodge out of the way as Yank expectorated a tobacco flood in alarming proximity to his head.

"Float the nagur. Sind him adrift on a terbacker tide. Sure, an' we have no use fer the likes av 'im!" cried Barney, enraged because Pomp had stepped on his favorite corn.

Meanwhile Frank Reade had set the tally-ho in motion again, and before the discomfited deserter could order his band to interpose, the vehicle had passed his band and was proceeding swiftly on its way.

The deserters pursued for a short distance, but they soon abandoned the chase as futile.

"So, so. I think we shall find your conjectures as to what might transpire true. The squaws of the dead gold mine Injuns seem to have already rallied the Sioux to their support," said Frank to Beckbridge.

"Yas, and we shall have to do some tall fighting to git possession of the mine, I consait."

"I have been troubled by a reflection which you gentlemen may not have considered," said Dr. Vaneyke. "There is a question of right and justice involved in this mine business. Had old Getchewan a right to give away the lost gold mine, and have we the right to wrest it from the hands of the Indian women who are now in possession?"

"As to that, I think we may conclude that the Indian must have acquired possession by injustice. No doubt they murdered or drove away the Spaniards to whom the mine belonged by right of discovery," replied Frank.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE TRAIL OF THE LOST GOLD MINE CANNOT BE FOUND.

We are now compelled to return to the united bands of white outlaws and Sioux Indians whom Frank Reade and his friends had eluded.

Brant Forges, the half-breed chief who meant to rob Beckbridge of the secret of the lost gold mine, and Adam Marvan, the arch plotter, who sought to remove the obstacle in the way of his possessing the Baldwin fortune by causing the death of Owen Strathmore's Little Sunshine, questioned Santah, the Sioux who had been set free by the inventor's party, closely when the captive reached their band.

Santah was an acute listener, and he possessed a retentive memory, and so he remembered all that had passed between the white men of Frank Reade's party.

Now it chanced that the cunning Sioux had overheard some remarks which caused him to understand that one who was called "Little Sunshine" had been left in Helena by Yank Beckbridge the trapper.

When, as they soon did after his arrival, the two white outlaws questioned Santah as to whether there was a little white girl in the tally-ho, the Indian said no. But he added the information Adam Marvan most desired to obtain.

Straightway Santah told that a white girl whom the old trapper called Little Sunshine had been by him left in Helena.

Until that moment Adam Marvan had supposed that little Sunshine was with her foster-father, the old trapper, Yank Beckbridge.

"Hal' ha! At last the child whose life stands between me and a golden inheritance shall be found. Once I hold the proofs of her death I can return to the east and claim old Squire Baldwin's gold as the only living heir," said Marvan exultantly as soon as Santah had revealed the secret of little Sunshine's whereabouts.

But Brant Forges grasped his companion's arm and hissed sternly:

"But I say you must not harm the child, little Sunshine. At least not for the present!"

"And why not, pray?" demanded the other, in a tone of anger and surprise.

"Because the child must first serve *me*."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, do you not discern my drift? You are aware that the child little Sunshine is as dear to the old trapper as if she was his own daughter."

"True."

"Very well. To save her life I take it he would even surrender the secret of the lost gold mine to me."

"Ah, I comprehend."

"Certainly. My project must be plain—I mean to use the child little Sunshine to secure the gold secret, and then you can do with her as you like."

"I agree. We are partners, and we must work in unison."

"Yes, and the interest of one must become the interest of the other," said Brant Forges.

After this a long consultation ensued between

the two scoundrels, during which they perfected a daring plan for the abduction of Little Sunshine.

Finally the great Sioux chief, Sitting Bull, was called into the council.

"We need a keen, superior trailer, one who can be relied upon to trail the white men who have fled in their 'bad medicine' wagon. Can Sitting Bull furnish us with such a brave? We will pay well for his services," said Adam Marvan.

The red chief assented, and he called a young and agile warrior to his side, and indicated that the trailer the whites desired was at their service.

"Black Arrow is the greatest trailer of all my tribe, and he is as swift of foot as the antelope," said Sitting Bull.

Then the whites conversed with the young Indian. It was arranged that he should trail the electric coach, go where it might, and that he was to leave certain markings along the trail to guide those who proposed to eventually follow.

Very soon the Indian took the trail of the electric tally-ho and from that time he never lost the trail for a moment.

Of course he was far behind the electric vehicle most of the time, for no man could compete with the tally-ho in point of speed.

The Indian was faithful to his master, and he followed the instructions of the white schemers to the letter.

At regular intervals he marked the trail in the manner agreed upon, so that when Adam Marvan and Brant Forges came to traverse the same route, they would have no doubt as to their course.

All this presaged stirring adventures and startling developments, of which Frank Reade and his comrades had no idea.

But to return to the inventor and his friends.

The tally-ho entered the mountains the day after the encounter with the deserter. Beckbridge knew many of the passes and old Indian trails, but soon the explorers passed beyond the range of the trapper's stamping grounds and he could no longer guide them.

Thereafter they were obliged to depend upon the old Indian map.

Often it was consulted, but at length even the map seemed at fault, for the landmarks indicated as guide-posts upon it could not be found.

What to do in this dilemma was a question of serious importance.

It was finally decided, after some three weeks had been spent in vainly exploring the mountains in quest of the lost trail, that, as winter was coming on and already there were indications that the close of the October days would no doubt witness the advent of snow storms and unfavorable weather, it would be advisable to seek some sheltered place and establish a winter camp, or else set out on the return journey and defer further explorations until the following spring.

The tally-ho was not provisioned for a winter sojourn in the mountains, and prudence suggested that the search for the lost gold mine must for the present season be abandoned.

It was with extreme reluctance that the several members of the party admitted this fact, but there was no gainsaying it, and therefore, with many regrets, Frank Reade finally turned the heads of his electric team in the direction of home one day as the month of October was drawing to a close.

Already the weather was cold, for in that high altitude the chill of winter follows closely in the footsteps of balmy fall.

Beckbridge shook his head and advised haste, saying:

"I kin feel the snow in the air, and the Lord help us all if a blizzard should catch us up here in the mountains. Since we hev got to go back, let's make tracks as fast as possible."

But no great speed could be attained in the devious passes and winding mountain trails which lay between the tally-ho and the open prairie.

The tally-ho had rounded a bend in the mountain trail two days later, when all heard cries of distress from the wayside. There had been a high wind the preceding night, and now the explorers saw a tree had been blown down near by.

The cries of distress they heard were uttered by some one under the tree, it seemed. Frank Reade stopped the tally-ho, and he and Beckbridge alighted. The trapper stalked ahead of Frank, and in a moment discovered an Indian under the fallen tree, where he lay pinned to the earth unable to move.

The trapper, aided by all the rest, who were called upon for assistance by Frank, managed to move the fallen tree and extricate the Indian.

The Indian became insensible before the tree was removed. The doctor, however, soon revived him, and then it was found that his left arm was crushed and his shoulder severely injured. A small blood-vessel in the arm had been ruptured, and the Indian had fainted from loss of blood. The doctor and the old trapper set the Indian's arm, and kindly cared for him. Then he was

placed in the tally-ho, and the homeward journey was resumed.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LITTLE SUNSHINE IN CAPTIVITY.

OF course the failure of Frank Reade's party to find the landmarks in the mountains set down in the old Indian map of the route was attributed to the theory advanced by Dr. Vaneyke.

All were ready to admit that in all likelihood volcanic eruptions or other changes in nature of a similar character had been at work in the Montana mountains since the map of the Indians had been made.

Now the prospect of success the next spring became doubtful. Beckbridge was ready to despair. He was in his own mind well convinced that the white captive of the lost gold mine, regarding whom the old chief Getchewan had spoken, must be his partner, the father of Little Sunshine, as we know. It was on this account that the old trapper's regret was so deep.

When the journey was resumed after the wounded Indian was found the trapper remarked:

"The Injun lood-stun in my natur generally hez a sort o' galvanic influence on my huntin' knife and rifle when ther's a red around. But sartin when an enemy is helpless, even if he are a red-skin, Yank Beckbridge ain't ther critter ter go back on him, by powder! It don't run in the Beckbridge famby. There was a great uncle o' mine what figgers in history. That feller was Good Samaritan Beckbridge, an' I hern ther parson down ter ther fort read 'bout him outen a book. It seemed old Good was cumin' hum from a hunt, when he run agin a wounded Injun beside the trail what all the other trappers had passed by. But my uncle Good he up and poured rattlesnak eile on the wounded red an' fixed him O. K."

The old trapper's merry eyes twinkled, but he looked solemn.

"Your family certainly must have been a very ancient one," commented the doctor dryly.

"Sartin. That was my uncle Noah on my mother's side. He was an old trapper. I consait he was a sort o' a sailor, too, fer he got up a first class float jest in time to git aboard with his men-agria afore the big flood come."

"Indeed, I think, friend trapper, that your imagination is prone to lead you out of the trail of veracity," said the doctor, smiling.

That evening a halt was made to give Barney and Pomp a chance to cook a supper. But as they were kindling a fire Beckbridge called attention to bear tracks and the imprint of Indian moccasins in the soft soil.

"Begob, an' it's a grizzly bear that the loikes av me hez made up me mind to hev the glory av slauhterin'." Come on wild yez, Pomp, an' we'll kill the basties, be the powers!" cried Barney.

The two reckless fellows rushed away, rifles in hand, and disappeared among the rocks. In a few moments a yell was heard, and back came Barney and Pomp closely pursued by a huge grizzly.

Pomp bounded ahead of Barney as they came in sight of the tally-ho. But the next instant down he went. Barney fell over Pomp, and as he tumbled he yelled:

"Kill the nagur! Begob, he hez assassinated the loikes av me. It's a trick av the blackguard to murder a gentleman in cold blood that made him fall."

"Dat's a lie, sah!" roared Pomp.

The succeeding instant the bear pounced upon them, and such yells as emanated from their lips as they scrambled about ought to have frightened any ordinary grizzly out of his wits.

It seemed that the grizzly had not yet sighted the tally-ho, for it was around a bend just beyond the spot where the Irishman and Pomp had fallen. Just as the bear pounced upon the fallen men Beckbridge shouted:

"Look out! I'm a-going to give the grizzly a shot!"

Then suddenly "bang!" went the old trapper's gun, and over toppled the great bear. It was a great shot—that of a true marksman. The bullet entered one of the huge animal's little pig-like eyes, and he fell, with a bullet in his brain, as though struck by lightning.

Barney and Pomp were on their feet almost simultaneously, and off came the Irishman's coat and down in the dirt went his hat, while he doubled up his fists and danced about like mad as he yelled:

"Come on, ye murtherin' divil yez! Come on, ye blackguard av the wuruld! Begob, is it lavin' an Irish gentleman fer bear meat yez are after doin'? Begob, an' it's a dead nagur there'll be fore-nist the likes av me in a whisk!"

"Go 'long wid yah! Don't make a fool of yer-self, Irish."

"An' yez call me a fool! Faith an' I'm a peaceful mon, an' I am thyrin' to git away from the loikes

av yez widout a foight; but, begob, I'll run no fuder, an' I'll take no more av yer dares," roared Barney, and he made a quick jump and hit Pomp on the ear.

"Dat's all right, come agin!" cried the dorky, but he shook his head pretty smartly.

"Whoop! But it's an elegant ruction intirely. Will yez have the politeness to stand up til me loike a man, bad seran til yez. Faith, I have me eye on yez, an' I see yez are gittin' up steam fer yer cast-iron head!" cried Barney, as Pomp began to duck.

"Come, come, stop that—no fighting!" cried Frank, just as Pomp made a butt.

He plunged at Barney head first like a flash. Down went the Irishman, and he did not want to fight any more. He picked himself up with such a rueful expression that all were obliged to laugh.

There was bear-steak for supper that evening.

All but Beckbridge seemed to have overlooked the fact that there were Indian tracks about. But the trapper was alert and watchful. Presently the air became full of white flakes.

"Snow!" exclaimed Frank Reade.

"Yes, and I'm desperate afeard we're agoin' ter have a big storm," said Beckbridge.

The doctor had been conversing with the wounded Indian, and he now said:

"The savage tells me he is a Sioux, and that his name is Black Arrow."

This was the truth. The Indian whose life Frank Reade and the old trapper had saved was the very Indian who had trailed them so long in the service of Marvan and Brant Forges. He it was who had marked the trail that was to guide the enemy on his preservers' tracks.

Faster and faster fell the snow. That a shelter for the tally-ho must be found soon all felt. But they knew not where to seek it. Suddenly the voice of Black Arrow was heard.

"Let the white man go through the pass yonder, and where the great mountain sometimes smokes they shall find a shelter where the medicine-fires will keep them warm."

The tally-ho was quickly got in motion.

Through an opening in a narrow pass among the rocks it was guided. But all at once the silence of the mountain solitude was rudely broken. A wild Sioux war-whoop echoed through the defile behind the tally-ho.

Glancing back, the men of the tally-ho saw a dozen Indians, and among them Beckbridge sighted Santah, the Sioux, and the redskin yet wore the old trapper's precious buckskin breeches.

"Bars, panthers, an' bufflers!" yelled Beckbridge. "That he are—the pizen red varmint as wears the widder's—I mean my buckskin breeches! Har goes ter git 'em back, for the sake o' the widder, or lose what hair time hez left old Yank!"

The trapper recklessly bounded out of the tally-ho. But the succeeding moment he paused as if stricken motionless or turned to stone by the sight of a Medusa.

The Indians' ranks parted, and behind them Yank Beckbridge beheld his darling Little Sunshine held between two desperate-looking white men.

Brant Forges and Marvan confronted the trapper.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CUNNING VERSUS CUNNING.

THE desperate and determined enemies of the old trapper and his "pard's" little daughter had trailed the tally-ho down at last.

Subsequently to the departure of Black Arrow, the Sioux trapper who had been sent to track the electric conveyance, the two plotting villains, Adam Marvan and Brant Forges, had temporarily left their band and proceeded to Helena.

There they managed to locate the peaceful home of which Little Sunshine had become a member, and it was not long before the evil men found an opportunity to abduct the child heiress of the great Baldwin fortune.

The time which had been wasted by Frank Reade and his friends in a vain quest for the lost trail had consumed weeks, as we have intimated, and therefore ample time was granted the outlaw and his friend to rejoin the band with Little Sunshine and follow the trail of the tally-ho which Black Arrow had so plainly and indelibly marked.

When Brant Forges rejoined his band and set out to follow the marked trail his force was augmented by the accession of a party of Sioux warriors led by Santah.

The latter was a Southern Sioux, and he and his braves were not members of the northern branch of the great aboriginal nation, which the statement of the deserter-chief seemed to indicate, had become the allies of the Blackfoot Amazons of the lost gold mine.

Santah and his braves were bound to the service of the white outlaws at least for the present.

Whether they would take sides against the men of their own race if they ever encountered them at the lost gold mine, was, of course, an open question.

Never during the whole period of his long career as plainsman, trapper and Indian fighter had old Yank Beckbridge been confronted with such a startling surprise as when he was about to rush upon Santah to secure his precious buckskin breeches he beheld Little Sunshine, whom he at that moment believed to be secure in her Helena home, in the power of the white outlaws.

At the same moment that Yank Beckbridge saw the sweet-faced child who had enshrined herself in the most sacred citadel of his heart, she was discovered by the other members of the party, and Barney shouted:

"Begob, the white blackguards wid the little gal are the two spalpeens named Brant Forges an' Adam Marvan, what Pomp and mesel' heard plottin' agin' the trapper an' the little colleen. Bad luck to them!"

"Back to the tally-ho for your life, Yank! The redskins are creeping along the rocks, intent upon cutting off your return!" cried Frank Reade, as through the steadily falling snow and the accumulating shadows, he observed certain movements of the Sioux which were in accordance with his warning.

As though the words of the young inventor had served to break the spell of the dread discovery he had just made, Yank Beckbridge turned with the utmost celerity and bounded back to the tally-ho.

Not a single shot was fired at the retreating trapper by his enemies, for his immediate death was not in accordance with the plans of the white outlaw chief.

Frank Reade had turned off the electricity and halted the tally-ho, when Yank Beckbridge impulsively leaped from the vehicle at discovering Santah, the wearer of his beloved buckskin breeches.

Now suddenly the inventor revolved the reflectors of the electric lights so that they would radiate in the rear, and in a moment the wonderfully brilliant light of the magnesium coils, in combustion, was shooting back through the falling snow in blinding rays, making the defile like an enchanted realm, as the snow flakes caught the gleam.

"Advance at your peril! We have our electric battery in readiness. Dare to enter the passage we occupy and the deadly battery shall belch forth its leaden hail upon you!" cried Frank Reade to the enemy.

"We don't mean to charge you now. We have another plan to secure what we want. I have suthin' to say to Yank Beckbridge," said Brant Forges.

"They have got Little Sunshine in their power, I consait. Old Yank would lay down his life for the little one, and he's got ter listen to the pizen varmint," breathed the trapper in an undertone.

Then aloud he cried:

"Speak out, ye 'farnal renegade!"

"You see the child here in our power, so you understand we hold a trump card in the little game we are playin'. Very good. Now to the pint. I know you have the map of the trail leading to the lost gold mine of the first Spanish treasure-seekers. That map I want. I make you an offer. Surrender the map, and the child, Little Sunshine, shall be delivered to you unharmed. Refuse, and she shall meet her death before your eyes," spoke Brant Forges.

"Varmint," replied the trapper, with difficulty controlling his emotions. "If ye harm one hair of that teetle one's head, Yank Beckbridge will hev' yer life, as sure as ther world stan's. He will, by powder!"

"Braggadocio! Speak to the point, old trapper. What do you say in reply to my proposal?"

"I've got ter think. Gimme time. Say half an hour for consideration."

"That I will do. Then if you conclude to come to my terms, you will come or send some one with the map to the entrance of the passage in which you now are. At the expiration of the half hour I will be there with the child. I shall be prepared for treachery, so take care."

"Supposin' I agree ter give up the map fer Little Sunshine, how will the exchange be made when we meet. I consait I sha'n't trust sich a pizen critter as you be fur."

"You must trust my word. I'll meet you alone at the spot I have mentioned, and if you give me the map I'll give you the child. We shall be man to man. Are you afraid to meet me alone?" said Forges.

"No, by powder."

At that moment Little Sunshine, who had thus far remained speechless, said:

"Oh, papa Yank, take me away from these bad men! Please do! I am afraid of them. Oh, so very, very much afraid!"

The childish voice was full of pathetic appeal, the little one's arms were involuntarily stretched

out toward the old trapper, who had been to her a kind and loving foster-parent.

Tears of anger and pity were in Yank's eyes. His rifle sprang to his shoulder, and for an instant the deadly sights covered the arch-villain who held Little Sunshine a captive.

But the outlaw pushed the child before him as a shield and called out tauntingly:

"Now fire, if you dare!"

The old trapper lowered his rifle. His broad chest rose and fell swiftly. His great hands clenched themselves fiercely as though he could have torn Brant Forges limb from limb.

"Yank Beckbridge never yit scalped a white man? but by powder, he'll do it some day if he an' Brant Forges both live!" the trapper sibilated.

"Beckbridge, you are placed in a trying position and, you have our sympathy. Now let me offer you some advice," said the good doctor, placing his hand upon the trapper's shoulder.

Beckbridge bowed his head and the doctor continued:

"In less than half an hour I can make an exact copy of the original map. I have with me chemicals by the application of which I can obliterate some of the landmarks on the map in such a way that the villain cannot tell it has been tampered with. Do you grasp my meaning?"

"Yes."

"Then you can surrender the original map to the outlaw in exchange for the child, and the map will not benefit the scoundrel or aid him to find the lost gold mine."

"Doctor, you are a friend ter tie too, by powder. Fix ther map. I'll balk ther pizen critter yet and save Little Sunshine, too, by powder," cried the trapper in a low voice.

"Your idea is an excellent one," assented Frank Reade. "But I suspect treachery."

The movements of the crew of the electric tally-ho were entirely concealed from the enemy when they retired inside the vehicle.

The old trapper produced the old Indian map of the route to the lost gold mine, and Dr. Vaneyke set to work to copy it.

This task was accomplished, and then the scientist produced the needed chemicals, and the work of obliterating the essential landmarks on the original map was carefully attended to.

When all was done Yank Beckbridge appeared on the top of the tally-ho and informed the outlaw that he was ready to make the proposed exchange.

Then Brant Forges advanced to the entrance of the narrow pass, leading Little Sunshine by the hand.

Beckbridge went to meet him.

At the entrance of the pass was a great projecting rock. Beside this Forges paused. The rock extended ten feet in the direction of the tally-ho. Forges said:

"Place the map on the end of the ledge and retire ten paces. I will come and get the map, and if it's all right I'll send the child forward."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE BLIZZARD—IN THE CAVE.

MEANWHILE, the snow-storm had been almost continuously increasing in violence, and the trapper knew that a dread western blizzard or winter cyclone of snow and wind was assuredly at hand.

As he left the tally-ho to go to meet Brant Forges, the trapper was almost hurried from his feet by a terrific gust of wind which swept through the narrow pass furiously.

The air was full of snow. But it no longer fell in gentle flakes, but on the contrary it was now pulverized, like frozen sand, cutting, suffocating. The death-dealing, blinding character of the snow in the dreadful blizzards of the West was now the feature of the storm.

The wind moaned, shrieked and howled. The night had fallen, and but for the rare brilliancy of the electric light Yank could not have discerned his way a foot. But the light was reflected beyond the entrance of the pass.

The trapper heard the voice of the outlaw and also that of Little Sunshine. He caught, as he drew near them, the faint outlines of their fur muffled forms through the shifting curtain of driving snow.

"Little Sunshine!" Beckbridge shouted, as he heard the last words we have recorded as spoken by the outlaw.

"I am here papa Yank. Oh, come and get me quick!" the child responded.

And Yank plunged forward through the storm. He placed the Indian map on the end of the ledge as Brant Forges had directed, and secured it there by placing a heavy stone on one corner of the buckskin parchment.

Then retreating ten paces, Beckbridge called out:

"Ther map is on ther ledge."

Brant Forges did not answer, save for a guttural cry expressive of his satisfaction. But he darted

forward. Four Indians crouched beside the ledge in the rear of the place Forges had occupied. He gave them a signal as he advanced. One of them threw his blanket over the head of Little Sunshine and carried her backward, while she was unable to utter a cry.

The other three Sioux warriors crept forward in the footsteps of Brant Forges. He reached the end of the ledge, groped about upon it for a moment, and then clutched the buckskin parchment Beckbridge had left there and thrust it into his bosom.

"Come on!" he cried. "Now I send the child to meet you. Brant Forges keeps his word!"

The arch-traitor glided backward, leaving the three Indians who had now gained the end of the ledge crouching beside it.

The outlaw had planned his trap well. The three Indians were to fall upon the trapper and slay him without mercy when he came within their reach.

Beckbridge advanced the instant Forges called out for him to do so. He reached the end of the ledge. Then, like a trio of fierce demons of the dreadful storm, the three Indians leaped upon the brave old trapper.

"A trap, by powder!" gritted Beckbridge through his set teeth as he battled for his life.

But when he left the tally-ho Barney said:

"Be mesoul, Master Frank, and it's Pomp an' mesel' as will be after follin' the ould mon, as a rare guard. The red nagurs an' the white blackguards will be after thyrin' on some root game wid the loikes av him, an' sure yez won't rob Pomp an' mesel' av a chance fur an illegant bit av a ruction when we kin save the ould man at the same time, plaze the fates av it."

"Gollie, Irish. Dat's de idee what hab jiss done hatched out inside ob my cranium."

"Excellent, Barney. Go by all means," assented Frank, who was not without misgivings.

Pomp and Barney quickly left the tally-ho. They crept close to the wall of the narrow passage, and the shadows hid them.

When the three Indians, whom the white outlaws had left to fall upon Beckbridge made their attack, Barney and Pomp rushed to their old friend's support.

"Whack!" came the fighting Irishman's shillalah down on the head of one of the redskins.

"Thud!" went Pomp's head in the stomach of another of the murderous trio as he butted the redskin over.

The old trapper's derringer exploded, and the third Indian fell.

Then the three whites fell back. Beckbridge knew Forges did not mean to surrender Little Sunshine.

The brave trio regained the shelter of the tally-ho. Old Yank was well-nigh wild with alarm for the fate of Little Sunshine now.

But nothing more could be done looking to her preservation then, and the tally-ho went on through the storm.

Soon the mouth of a cavern was reached.

"Go on," said the injured Indian, Black Arrow.

"Under the mountains are the great caves where the medicine fires of the mountains that used to smoke will keep us all warm."

Into the cave, whose entrance was spacious, Frank Reade guided the tally-ho.

Then, soon a scene of wonders was revealed. A series of connecting caverns were revealed.

The walls were composed of rare formations. There were great crystals of many colors and here and there hung pendant glittering formations which were like grand chandeliers suspended from the rock-ribbed ceiling.

And as the tally-ho advanced, the air became warmer all the time. The explorers were filled with wonder. They knew they were approaching the source of heat. They asked themselves what it was, and the explanation was given by Dr. Vaneyke.

"Undoubtedly we are approaching the crater of an unknown volcano, whose outer opening has become closed, and which is not sufficiently active to make eruptions."

Thus said the old scientist.

The heat finally became so intense that Frank, although curious to explore further, was compelled to retreat. He ran the tally-ho back to a point where the temperature was more comfortable.

Then Black Arrow said that he had long known of the existence of the caves of "the medicine fires"—as he designated them. He affirmed, too, that there were many caves in the neighborhood.

The situation of Frank Reade and his friends was now most alarming, although immediate danger might be guarded against.

The blizzard, which raged furiously outside the cave, would fill the trails and mountain passes with drifts of snow the tally-ho could never pass until the spring thaw came.

"It's a hard thing ter say, but it's plain we are

shut up here in the mountain for the winter," said Beckbridge.

"Do you really think so? But there is no need to ask that. A moment's reflection tells me you are right. But how are we to live? We have provisions on hand which may last a month. After that, what?" said Frank Reade.

All were silent. The doctor shook his head. Beckbridge seemed at loss to reply.

"The prospect is disheartening. But we may consider that our enemies will perish in the storm, I think," finally said Dr. Vaneyke.

"No," said Black Arrow, the wounded Indian. "The Sioux with the white outlaws know where to find other caves and they will enter them."

"Well, we may as well make the best of the situation and set up an electric barricade at the entrance of the cave to prevent a surprise when the blizzard subsides," Frank advised.

Then wires were gotten out of the supply locker and they were laced across the entrance of the cave so as to form an impassable barrier.

Then one end of this wire labyrinth was connected with the electric battery and the whole wire barricade was charged with electricity.

This done, Beckbridge was left in charge of the tally-ho with the wounded Indian, and the others went forward to explore the cave further.

Yank Beckbridge was bowed down with grief. He said:

"Now the murderous outlaws will kill Little Sunshine. Ther pizen varmints will not spare her, since they have the map."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SNOW-BOUND IN THE MOUNTAINS.

"BLACK ARROW hears the white man's words. The trailer is his friend because he saved his life when the tree held him fast. Black Arrow speaks with a straight tongue, and he tells the white trapper that the little white squaw will not be slain while she is among these mountains," said the wounded Sioux.

"What's that, Injun! Don't trifle with old Yank, er ye'll find him powerful dangerous, I consait," cried Beckbridge, incredulously.

"Black Arrow's tongue travels a straight trail. These mountains of the medicine fires are by all the Sioux held sacred to the great Manito, and in no case will the red men allow blood to be shed among them save in hand to hand fight. The traditions of the medicine men say the life of a captive must not be taken among these mountains, or the anger of the great Manito will be aroused against the tribe."

"Thank ye fer them words, redskin!" exclaimed Beckbridge. "Ye mean ter say ther Sioux won't let the white outlaws put Little Sunshine ter death if they want to do so, I take it."

"The white trapper has heard aright, and now Black Arrow will tell him that he means to prove his gratitude. Listen."

The voice of the wounded Indian became a whisper, and he spoke long and earnestly.

When he had concluded, Yank Beckbridge's weather-beaten features were all alight with a new hope. Evidently what communication Black Arrow had made, had banished to a great degree the despairing feelings which the old trapper had previously suffered on account of Little Sunshine's peril.

But let us follow Frank Reade and the other members of his party. They went on and on. Frank carried an electric torch and thus light was gained.

Finally, as they drew near the heart of the mountain and the heat became almost unbearable, they discovered a pit of fire ahead.

Its general formation enabled the old scientist to at once decide that it was the crater of an old volcano.

"Begorra, fat's that!" suddenly yelled Barney, in tones of alarm as the party was retreating from the brink of the crater.

All turned and Pomp gave a yell, while the wool seemed to stand straight upon the top of his head, so great was his fright.

Frank Reade and his friends beheld a strange sight, and one certainly calculated to inspire terror.

Up from the brink of the crater all at once crawled a great winged serpent, which resembled a cayman or South American crocodile, and also one of those remarkable sea monsters which have from time to time been discovered in the ocean.

The terrible monster of the volcano reared until ten feet of his huge length stood erect. His great jaws gaped, and a hissing roar came forth.

"Worra! worra! It's the devil's own snake!" yelled Barney, and he took to his heels.

Frank and the doctor had brought their rifles with them, and they leveled their weapons at the monster. But before they could press the trigger the remarkable creature vanished, seemingly going down into the fiery pit of the volcano.

"This surpasses all my experience, and all the knowledge of natural history I possess does not give me the least idea as to what that wonderful monster is," said the doctor, as he and Frank followed their comrade.

Just then Pomp's voice was heard. He cried: "No, sah, Irish. 'Deed I didn't run like I was scared no more dan youse did."

"Ye did, thin. Its mesel' as was only runnin' til get a hand grenade to explode at the crocodile. Faith, an it's not an alleygater that kin scare an Irishmon."

"Yah, yah! You'se de wus case o' blow dat I ebber seed, Irish."

"Be the powers av gin, nagur, do yez realize who yez are making them remarks til?"

"Oh, go soak yer head."

"What's the disagreement now?" asked Frank, coming up.

"It's the nagur. Sure, Masther Frank, we hev no use for a nagur. Begob, an it's throwin' him til the allygater we hed best be doin'," said Barney.

"Doan' yergit too funny, Irish, fo' I butt some ob dat nonsense out ob yer!"

"Does me ears decave me, er did I hear the nagur threaten the likes av mesel'? Be the powers av turf I kin accomodate yez if yez are bound to pick a foight. Sure an I'm a peaceful mon, but, begob, I'll not rason wid yez, an' thry to quite the ugly timper av the loikes av yez longer. So, begob, come on wid yez, and I'll bate the head av yez. The wurrum will turn at last, begob!" roared Barney.

But the next moment he sat down very hard. Pomp's head had come in contact with his stomach. It was a striking demonstration. Barney seemed duly impressed.

For the present Barney was ready to subside.

"Worra, but the head av the nagur is harder than me stomach. Sure, an' I'll get even wid him yet, though. Wait until he tries dat buttin' business, an' I'll give dat nagur a surprise dat will last the coon all winter," muttered Barney, as he picked himself up.

Further explorations were made in the cave. It was ascertained that there was no outlet save the one through which the tally-ho had come.

That night, when Frank and his comrades returned to the tally-ho, Beckbridge reported that the enemy had not appeared. It was concluded that they had sought shelter in some other of the caves of which Black Arrow had told.

The storm raged for three days furiously. At the end of that time, when it had somewhat subsided, Beckbridge removed a section of the barricade and crept out of the cave. But he did not go more than a few paces.

The pass was filled with snow.

The great white wall was at least a hundred feet high.

Beckbridge came back inside the cave and said: "We are caught sure enough. The snow are drifted clear to the ledges on the top of the mountain walls above the defile. Here we have got to stay."

The company fully understood the situation. Starvation seemed destined to be their ultimate fate.

But they were brave and calm, and Frank examined their store of provisions. He estimated that by husbanding every morsel as carefully as possible the food might be made to last for two months instead of one as he had first thought.

All were willing to be put on half rations and this was done. The days passed monotonously.

Beckbridge thought it possible to reach the ledge above the defile at the mouth of the cave, and he constructed a rope-ladder, to one end of which he fastened a stout cord. Then having tied a stone to the free end of the cord he threw it up among the projecting rocks. After making several casts the cord caught over the end of a great rock, and the weight of the stone caused it to fall at the trapper's feet, leaving the cord drawn taut around the rock. Then Beckbridge, by means of the cord, drew up the ladder and succeeded in firmly catching its top-most round over the great rock. After that he climbed the ladder and reached the top of the ledge.

The trapper hoped to find game but he returned with the disheartening intelligence that he could not discover a single track of a living creature.

After this the time went wearily by until finally the last morsel of food was consumed, and the dark specter of famine entered the cave.

CHAPTER XL.

THE WONDERFUL VALLEY.

THE supreme hour seemed to have arrived when Frank Reade and his comrades had consumed the last morsel of food, and yet there was no possibility of escape from the cave beside the volcano.

Even the electric team, wonder though it was, and possessing remarkable attributes, could not be

made to force its way through the miles and miles of immense drifts that obstructed all the mountain trails and passes, and even the prairie beyond.

But Frank Reade and his comrades were by no means inclined to sit down and apathetically await their doom.

Although their explorations thus far had convinced them that there was no exit from the cave save by the route they had traversed to enter it, they were now impelled to renew their explorations.

The possibility of discovering some passage through the mountain which might lead them out where the snow drifts were less lofty, or where they might secure some of the wild animals of the mountains for food, urged the snow-bound gold hunters on.

The cravings of hunger intense and not to be subdued save by food, which was not to be found in the cave, drove the party to make investigations which they had previously declared to be entirely hopeless.

At this dark period even Barney and Pomp seemed deprived of their usual spirits. Silent and perturbed, they went about, no longer joking or quarreling, but anxious and thoughtful.

"We hev got to find game somewhere or we are done fer," said Beckbridge, solemnly, as the day their food was exhausted the party set out to make a new exploration in the further depths of the cave.

The trapper voiced the conviction of all, and Frank responded:

"The probability of obtaining food is small indeed, but while there is life there is hope. Let us not despair until the very last."

Into the depths of the mysterious mountain the party journeyed, and as they approached the crater of the ancient and now torpid volcano, and the heat became intensified, they thought of the strange monster they had seen there.

They were not without apprehension that the creature might attack them, and Barney and Pomp, whose superstitious fears were at work, fell in the rear.

But the doctor's logical brain was busy with a problem, which was suggested as his thoughts reverted to the monster of the crater.

Presently the old scientist voiced a theory which a simple and natural course of reasoning had enabled him to evolve.

"It is evident," said he, "that the strange creature we saw at the crater must find food somewhere. It belongs to an order of the Salurians, which perish easily when exposed to cold, and which exist only in a warm climate, or where, as in this instance, there is plenty of artificial heat. Granting this we establish the fact that the monster cannot venture outside of the cave where the temperature is freezing in pursuit of food, thus we prove that the creature must find food in the cave. The food that sustains the creature would undoubtedly keep us alive. We must find the monster of the crater and track him to the source of his supplies."

"Bravo! Science and knowledge is power!" exclaimed Frank.

"Long life til the doethur. Sure an' he has the great head av his own!" cried Barney, and Pomp added:

"Gollie! I've got a great big idee ob my own."

"What is it, nagur?" queried Barney.

"If we can't find where dat alleygater gits him grub, maybe we kin kill him an' cut him up inter steaks to eat."

"Worra, an' it's not an Irishman as would be ather eatin' a snake!" cried Barney in disgust.

"We may be compelled to take Pomp's suggestion seriously," Frank stated.

"Your idea is an ingenious one, doctor. Let us by all means try to track the monster of the crater," he added.

"Yes," Beckbridge assented. "And to do that we hev got to sight the critter. Now I propose that we go on to the crater an' hide an' watch for the monster."

All approved of this plan, and so the party advanced until they were in sight of the underground crater.

Then they all concealed themselves behind protecting rocks. Fortunately they had not long to wait there in the heat. Possibly ten minutes elapsed, and then a peculiar hissing noise was heard and the monster for which the concealed men were watching appeared.

But this time it did not come out of the side of the crater. On the contrary, the monster emerged from a point at the side of the cavern almost opposite the place where Frank Reade and his companions were hidden.

Slowly the frightful creature trailed its scaly blizzard along until it disappeared at the very brink of the pit of flame, as it seemed to the watchers.

Then the doctor said:

"Instead of following the creature, since it is impossible for man to venture amid the intense heat

where it has gone, let us seek to follow the trail whence it came. Perhaps the remarkable animal has just returned from a quest for food."

"Forward! The doctor is always right!" cried Frank, enthusiastically.

The monster had left a plain trail. The party at once followed it in the direction indicated by the doctor. But presently the solid side wall of the cavern stopped them.

Here was a dilemma. But Beckbridge solved it by discovering an opening through which the monster had evidently crawled. It was so small a hole that it had not before been seen. The electric torch now revealed it indistinctly on account of the shadow of an overhanging ledge.

The opening which admitted of the passage of the monster of the crater was of course large enough for a man or two to crawl through at once.

Frank and Beckbridge erept through the opening, and the others followed them.

"Well, here we are in another cave!" exclaimed Frank, glancing about.

The cave which the party had now reached was an extensive one, and it was seen that the trail of the monster, still well marked, led onward.

With feelings of expectancy and suspense as they wondered to what the trail would finally lead them the party pressed on.

Suddenly Beckbridge paused. He and Frank were in the lead, and as the old trapper halted he grasped the inventor's arm impulsively, crying:

"Light ahead! By powder, there is a way out of the cave yonder!"

It was so. The faint light of day was discernable in the distance. All sprang forward. The trail of the monster led straight to the opening leading to the outer world.

In a moment or so the opening was reached, and then all paused in profound amazement at what they saw. The scene beyond the opening which gave access to the surface was so strange, so seemingly out of the natural order of things, that for the nonce all were inclined to think they had stumbled upon an enchanted realm.

The exit from the cave opened into a valley about a quarter of a mile broad, and perhaps half a mile long. This valley was sheltered by towering mountains on every side, whose snow-clad summits were in the misty distance. But wonder of wonders, the valley was devoid of snow, and more, it was green and fertile. The grass was luxuriant, flowers bloomed, and birds sang in the bushes. At some distance a flock of wild mountain sheep were feeding, and further on was a drove of antelope. Prairie-rabbits and other small game there was in abundance.

The air was balmy, and the temperature was some degrees warmer than summer usually is in that altitude.

Words cannot adequately convey an impression of the emotion which moved the hearts of the snow-bound explorers as they beheld the scene of summer plenty and beauty in the midst of winter.

Yet it seemed like a dream, a fantasy, an hallucination which must soon pass away.

"Are we awake or dreaming? How in the name of all things wonderful can this be?" cried Frank, as soon as his amazement permitted him to speak.

"It is all a glorious reality," replied the doctor, "and the remarkable phenomenon is easily explained on scientific principles. This valley is over the fiery furnace of the volcano which extends from the crater in this direction. The layer of rock formation under this soil, and between it and the fire of the volcano, is comparatively thin. Thus the earth is constantly in the condition imparted by the heat of summer. The evaporation is equalized by the vapor constantly condensed and falling by night upon the valley from the mountains, so the ground is kept moist. The smoke arising at intervals through the crevices in the rocks of the mountain-wall all along the valley tells where the warm air comes from."

"I understand it all, and I feel like thanking God for his infinite mercy in guiding us here," said Frank.

Beckbridge reverently uncovered his head, and the others followed his example.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE CAVERN OF DEATH.

THE explorers saw that the discovery of the beautiful summer valley had completely banished all their fears of starvation.

Food and water there was in abundance. Excellent springs were visible in the mountain-sides, where, owing to volcanic heat, they were protected from congelation.

All comprehended that the snow-fall of the terrible blizzard, which had occurred two months previously, had soon melted in the warm valley, and they saw channels by which the water had undoubtedly escaped through subterranean routes as the heat liquified the snow.

But hunger urged the explorers to pursue the game which abounded in the beautiful valley.

Barney and Pomp went in pursuit of an antelope, and they soon returned with some juicy steaks, which were quickly broiled over a campfire.

All partook of the food with the keenest relish, and Barney and Pomp told that the animals of the valley were so tame that it seemed they had not learned to fear man.

"Ah," said Dr. Vaneyke, "it must be that this hidden valley has never before been visited by man. Here we may live in peace and quietude until spring comes, and the snow melts out of the mountain passes."

"And enjoy a winter in the midst of the warmth of the tropics. There is everything needed to supply our wants here," replied Frank.

"But for the anxiety that I feel for Little Sunshine I consait I should be content to put in their winter right here. But I shall long for spring to come, and know no rest till I git on the trail of their pizen varmints that hev carried away Little Sunshine," said Beckbridge.

Black Arrow, the Indian, was now about recovered from his injuries, and, as he had been left behind at the tally-ho, Beckbridge volunteered to return for him.

The others went back with the trapper, and the tally-ho was run forward to the small opening in the rocks which communicated with the adjacent cave that led to the summer valley.

The passage was not sufficiently large to allow the entrance of the electric conveyance, and so the explorers set to work to enlarge it.

An explosion or two of powder did the work, blasting away the rocks until the way was enlarged, and the tally-ho was guided through it and on to the summer valley.

Black Arrow had shown his gratitude to the whites in so many ways since he became one of the party with Frank Reade, that they trusted him fully.

He was questioned about the summer valley, and he assured the party that the wonderful place was not known to the Indians.

The amazement which the Indian evinced at the sight of the valley was a confirmation of the truth of his words.

The explorers now felt perfectly secure.

They believed that they had no reason to anticipate the coming of the enemy, and that it was impossible for them to be surprised.

The valley was carefully explored, however. Search was made for an outlet by which men could enter or leave the valley, but none was discovered.

The explorers decided that no one could penetrate to the valley save by the route they had themselves traversed.

We need not dwell upon the peaceful months which elapsed. The explorers were undisturbed. Plenty and quietude was their lot through the winter.

Spring came at last.

As soon as the weather indicated that the snow must have melted out of the trails preparations were made for departure.

It was decided that Beckbridge should make a scout and note the condition of the outer world before the tally-ho left the valley.

Beckbridge was about to start, when Black Arrow, the Sioux trapper, whose life we know the trapper had saved, came to his side.

"The trapper will go with the great white hunter," said the Indian.

"As ye like, Injun," replied Beckbridge.

"Black Arrow knows the mountains well," the Indian continued.

"I think we can trust the trapper," said Frank.

"I am sure on it, by powder. Human nature are a book I've studied some. I consait an Injun natur are my stronghold. I reckon Black Arrow means fair. So come along, trapper," responded the trapper.

"Ugh! Black Arrow friend. White man save him life; Injun no forget."

"Good, you have the right spirit. All Indians are not ungrateful, it seems," spoke Frank.

"But they are mighty few and far between, 'cordin' ter my 'sperience," muttered the trapper.

Then he shouldered his rifle and left the valley, followed by Black Arrow.

The two caves were traversed by the Indian and the trapper.

They reached the wire barricade at the mouth of the cavern, which the tally-ho had first entered, and passed into the trail beyond.

The snow had well nigh melted. What remained would not seriously impede the progress of the electric conveyance, the trapper thought, and he was well pleased.

"Now Black Arrow go to keep his promise about the little white squaw the great white hunter seeks," said the Indian.

"Go, an' may ther good God guide ye. I reckon

yer one Indian with a white heart, brave, if yer hide is red," said the trapper with feeling.

He grasped the Indian's hand.

"Black Arrow will find the little white squaw and bring her back to the great white hunter. The white men who have the little squaw a captive will not suspect the trapper who has served them," responded the Indian.

"I reckon you're right, Injun. Leastways I hope so, by powder," the trapper rejoined.

Then Black Arrow hastened away. It seemed that his knowledge of the mountains was of service to him now, and that he knew of some cave in which he presumed it likely that the white outlaws and the Sioux had sought shelter.

But if the outlaws and the Indians with them had not fled from the mountains in time, it was to be conjectured that they must have starved, unless they had found another summer valley like the one discovered by Frank Reade's party, and that was scarcely probable.

Black Arrow sped on and on, until he came to the mouth of the cave. This underground retreat he boldly entered.

At once he discovered certain indications of the party he was in search of.

"Ugh!" grunted the Indian, gutturally. "I shall find dead men. Wah, the white outlaws and my brethren must have starved in here."

He went on, reflecting aloud:

"And the little white squaw must have perished. Ugh! Black Arrow feared this. But he would not tell the trapper. Be the little squaw dead or alive the trapper will keep his word and carry her back to the great white hunter."

The Indian advanced until he was in the depths of the cave. Then he made a terrible discovery. He came upon the remains of a large party of men—whites and Indians.

He had procured a torch within the cave and lighted it. The light thus afforded revealed the terrible scene.

Black Arrow soon convinced himself that he had discovered the band he was in quest of. He found the dead bodies of Brant Forges and Marvan, but among all the dead in that underground sepulcher he could not find Little Sunshine.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE WHITE HERMIT.

BLACK ARROW was amazed.

He could not understand why it was that he did not find the remains of Little Sunshine where all her captors had perished.

An examination of the bodies gave the Indian the assurance that the white outlaws and their Sioux allies had died of starvation.

Mystified most completely, Black Arrow seated himself to think. He strove to divine what the explanation of the absence of Little Sunshine's remains could signify. A thought came to his mind that made him shudder. But he put it away from him.

He asked himself if some solitary member of the party could have escaped with Little Sunshine, and he returned a negative answer to his own question.

Finally Black Arrow arose dejectedly and carefully explored the entire cave. But still the mystery remained as impenetrable as ever. Still there was nothing discovered to reveal the fate of the white captive.

Finally the Indian decided that the only course left for him was to return to the summer valley and tell Beckbridge, the trapper, all.

The Indian was walking dejectedly toward the entrance of the cave, when all at once a dark shadow fell across his pathway where it was illuminated by the torch in his hand.

Black Arrow recoiled like a flash and grasped a weapon in his girdle, as the succeeding moment he beheld a startling apparition.

An aged white man, clad in the skins of the mountain sheep, with his snow-white hair falling upon his shoulders, and whose beard reached to his girdle, stood before the Indian.

"Whence comest thou, red man?" demanded the hermit-like personage, in a stern, deep voice.

"From the mountains. The red man seeks a white child—a little girl—a squaw, who was with those who are gone to the happy hunting grounds," replied Black Arrow, pointing in the direction of the dead bodies of the white outlaws and their Indian allies.

"You are a Sioux. What would you do with the white captive?" demanded the old white man.

"Black Arrow's life was saved by a great white hunter called Beckbridge among his people. The brave has promised the white hunter to bring him back the little white squaw who was stolen away by the men who are dead."

"Do you speak straight, Indian?" exclaimed the aged white man.

"Come with me and you shall learn the truth of what the brave says. His tongue is on the straight

trail. Come, and Black Arrow will lead you to the old white hunter."

"Lead on, I will follow," answered the strange man.

Black Arrow started forward at once. The cave was left behind, and the Indian guided the aged white man to the entrance of the cave where he had left Beckbridge.

The old trapper stood before the wire barricade eagerly watching and waiting for the return of Black Arrow.

Beckbridge was much surprised when at length he discovered the Indian approaching, followed by the aged white man.

They soon came up.

"Trapper," said the stranger, "this Indian tells me he is a friend of yours, and that he is looking for a little white girl that he seeks to restore to you. Does he speak truly?"

"He does, I consait. Ther child was carried off by a band o' white an' red varmints. Her name are Little Sunshine, and she is very dear to the heart of old Yank Beckbridge, by powder!" replied the trapper, earnestly.

"Good! I am a recluse. My name is Wardwell, but because I have fled from the haunts of men and live entirely alone in the mountains of Montana for years I believe the trappers and Indians call me the white hermit," said the stranger.

"I have heard of you, I consait, stranger," replied the trapper, truthfully. "But can you tell me anything about the varmints who carried off my leetle gal?"

"Trapper, we will first let the Indian speak," the hermit replied.

Black Arrow bent a pitying glance upon the old trapper, and then he said:

"The trapper sought the men who stole the great white hunter's little squaw and he found them—"

"Found them! Do yer say yer found them? Ah! And is Little Sunshine yet alive?" cried the trapper.

"Black Arrow found the white outlaws and the Sioux in a cave where he met this aged white man. But all the band of Brant Forges were dead. The brave saw all their dead bodies that were like skeletons for lack of food, but he could not find the body of the little white squaw," said the Indian.

Beckbridge uttered a terrible cry, and he turned upon the mountain hermit fiercely.

"Speak, man, if ye know anything about my little gal!" he cried.

"Be calm, my friend. I am come to bring you tidings of joy. Your little girl lives, and is at this moment in a place of safety."

Beckbridge seized the hermit's hand.

"God will reward ye. But tell me all and let us hasten to the leetle gal," the trapper uttered, in tones of great joy.

"I will lead you to the child, and as we go I will clearly explain how it became my privilege to save your little girl."

Thus speaking, the hermit strode away and Beckbridge walked by his side, while Black Arrow followed in his footsteps.

"Say on," said Beckbridge, eagerly.

"For years I have made my home in one of the numerous caves of these mountains. Whyfore I chose this mode of life concerns no one but myself, and we will not touch upon that point. The cave which I dwell in chanced to be the very one in which the white outlaws and the Sioux, who had your little child a captive, sought shelter from the blizzard last winter. Now, leading from that cave to a smaller one is a secret passage, to which I had contrived a stone door. In the interior or second cave I made my home. Every summer I there store away sufficient dried meat and such other food as I need for an entire winter, for often, as during the winter that is just passed, I am snow-bound for months. I was in my secret cave when the band I am speaking of came into the outer cave. Of course I knew that it would not do to reveal my presence. Then when I learned that the terrible storm had filled the mountain passes, and that the strangers were snow-bound for months at least, I took every precaution to conceal my presence. I knew that if my retreat was found, the men who had entered the outer cave would eat up all my provisions in a few days, and then I should perish with them of starvation."

"But I resolved to save the little girl captive." The hermit paused, and the trapper breathlessly waited to hear the rest.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A JOYFUL REUNION.

THE hermit drew a deep breath or two as he paused, and then continued, speaking rapidly and with great earnestness.

"Yes, I resolved to save the child. Her helplessness, innocence and beauty appealed to my sympathy irresistibly. I watched my opportunity, and one night, while the band slept, I opened

the stone door of my interior cavern and glided forth bent on the rescue.

"Fortune favored my purpose, neither the white outlaws or the cunning Sioux awakened, and I crept to the child.

"Then came the greatest danger of the undertaking. I feared the child would awake and cry out in alarm upon discovering me. What should I do? How insure her silence? I must proceed precisely as though I meant to carry her off against her will without the knowledge of her captors, I thought. Upon that idea I acted at once.

"My blanket was upon my shoulder, I stooped beside the sleeping child, lifted her in my arms, and then sped away with her, having first muffled her head in the blanket and pressed one hand over her mouth to prevent her uttering a cry.

"There was not a sound, and with the utmost celerity I gained my secret retreat and released the little one and made known that I was her friend. I soon allayed her fears, and from that moment Little Sunshine regarded me as her friend.

"We shall find her safe and well in my secret retreat, whither I am now leading you."

Thus concluded the white hermit.

Then Beckbridge grasped his hand and pressed it warmly as he said:

"You kin call on old Yank for anything in his power to grant ye. There's my paw onter it, by powder. I consait yer ther right stuff, friend, though ye be on the 'hideout' yere in the mountains."

"I trust I am an honest man," replied the hermit, but his tone was sad.

"Got a secret hez that feller, by powder," thought Beckbridge, but he did not formulate this opinion.

The distance to the cave of death was traversed in a short space of time. Through the outer cavern the hermit led the way. The secret door was opened, and a moment subsequently Little Sunshine bounded into the old trapper's arms with a glad cry.

The happiness, the great joy of the old trapper at that moment can scarcely be described. After their long severance the reunion of Little Sunshine and the old trapper was a supreme epoch of joy in their lives which was ever to be remembered by them.

Yank and Little Sunshine conversed for a long time, and then saying good-bye to the hermit, at least for the time, they set out for the wonderful summer valley where the tally-ho and Beckbridge's comrades were.

Passing through the outer cave, Beckbridge suddenly paused and grasped the arm of Black Arrow, who strode silently at his heels.

"By powder, Injun, I nigh about furgot all about ther widder an' my buckskin breeches. I consait Santah was among ther band that starved ter death. Eh?" he said.

"The white hunter speaks straight," rejoined the Indian.

"Now, tell me was ther pizen critter in my buckskin breeches yit?"

"Ugh, yes. Santah wore the great hunter's beaded buckskins."

"Hurrah for our side! Traps and trappers; ther widder shill yit be mine! Injun, lead me ter ther varmint ez has been a runnin' around in ther widder's breeches so long."

"Come," laconically rejoined Black Arrow.

Then he led Beckbridge to the body of Santah, and the old trapper repossessed himself of his precious buckskin breeches, the rather unique token of "the widder's" love.

"Onct agin the old man are happy. Them breeches I'll wear back to the widder, an' she shill surrender, by powder! I consait, redskin, yer were never in love. No. Well, it's worse nor the small-pox, an' there's only one cure, marry the gal."

"Ugh, white hunter heap talk," said the Indian in contempt.

"That's er failin' o' ther Beckbridge fambly. But some on, we've got ter go ter summer valley."

Beckbridge, hand in hand with Little Sunshine, and still followed by Black Arrow, strode from the cave, carrying with him the buckskin breeches, which he had recovered at last.

Straight toward the wonderful mountain-walled valley the trio proceeded.

* * * * *

Meanwhile the others awaited their return.

There was nothing to employ the time of the snowbound ones it seemed, and yet recently Barney had been mysteriously absent from the others for hours at a time, and if he had been closely watched, he might have been seen to slyly convey some tools and a large plate of sheet iron, and certain other articles to a dense thicket at some distance from the camp in the valley.

The truth was Barney was secretly preparing something to surprise Pomp. Ever since the darky had butted him out of time the last time, they had a row, the Irishman had been planning to get even for once.

During his recent absence he had been at work in the thicket, and made a large semicircular plate of sheet iron, padded heavily with cotton on the inner surface, and covered with canvas. This Barney had now secured about his person under his clothes so as to serve as a stomach plate.

"Begob," said Barney, to himself, as he came from the thicket with his iron stomach plate on. "Faith an' I'll give the nagur a chance to butt the brains av him out this time, so I will."

Beckbridge and the Indian had been gone some time when Barney came swaggering up to where Pomp, who sat near the doctor and the young inventor beside the tally-ho, was rattling a pair of bones in real end-man style.

Barney meant to pick a quarrel, and so he said: "Do yez call that music, nagur? Sure an' I'll not have the heathen racket forninst the loikes av me."

Pomp only grinned and went on rattling the bones.

"Shut up wid yez!" roared Barney, and he suddenly kicked the bones out of Pomp's hands.

"Gollie! Ise gwine ter go fer yer Irish. Ise a colored gemman wid de war paint on jiss 'bout now, you heah me warble. Look out Irish, de bulljine am a comin'!" cried Pomp.

He ducked his head and rushed at Barney pell-mell. The Irishman didn't try to dodge. On the contrary, he braced himself and stood still to receive the shock.

Then bang came Pomp's head against Barney's iron "stomach-protector," and the darky reeled back half stunned, while Barney stood firm and fairly yelled with delight.

"Begob, an' it takes an Irishman to get the best av a nagur every time. Come on again. Come an' butt the brains out of yez. Sure an' it's waitin' for yez I am!" shouted Barney.

"Not dis eve. Some udder eve. Good eve," retorted Pomp, and he retired in good order.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE INDIANS ON THE MARCH.

WHILE the doctor and the inventor were laughing at the incident just related Beckbridge and Little Sunshine appeared upon the scene, followed by Black Arrow.

The party was warmly welcomed by Frank Reade and the others, and the old trapper in a few words related what the reader has already learned regarding the fate of the white outlaws and their red allies, as well how Little Sunshine had been saved, and finally restored to him.

All congratulated the trapper, and he said, dryly: "Ye do me proud. I consait I am the happiest man in Montana, bar none, at this identical time. I've got back my leetle gal and the widder's buckskin breeches, an' onct more ole Yank are hisself all over."

"What is the condition of the mountains beyond this valley?" Frank Reade asked, after some further conversation had ensued.

"Ther snow has about melted outen' ther trails."

"Good!" exclaimed the doctor. "You could not have brought us more welcome news. And now I suppose we can continue our journey."

"I reckon so."

"You consider the trails passable for the tally-ho then?" said Frank Reade.

"Yes, and we kin be movin' as soon as ye like, I reckon."

"Very good. We have but few preparations to make. We have cured a quantity of meat and put in a supply of succulent roots which the doctor discovered in the valley. Thus the tally-ho is provisioned anew," replied Frank.

"Then let us not delay. I consait we can't be far from the lost gold mine. Ther idea are powerful strong inter my mind that it's located somewhere in this ere cave country. But what gits me are the fact that we can't see nothin' o' the mounting shaped like a pyramid with a huge head on the top on it, which we take it marks the sight o' the lost mine," said Beckbridge.

The old trapper scratched his head and looked rather puzzled.

"I have decided, as I have intimated, that convulsions of a volcanic nature which have taken place in these mountains during the years that have elapsed since the old Indian map was made have thrown down the pyramid and the odd shaped rock by which it was previously crowned," the doctor hastened to say.

"I reckon yer on ther right trail o' the explanation," assented the trapper.

Then all the belongings of the party were packed away in the tally-ho. Frank Reade carefully examined all the intricate machinery of the wonderful vehicle and oiled every part of it. This done he announced that all was in readiness for departure.

The tally-ho was carefully and slowly run back through the cavern until it at length came out through the opening upon the pass where the

enemy had appeared at the time of the great blizzard.

All the party then entered the vehicle.

"Now that we are clear of the caves, the question once more arises in which direction shall we direct our course, whither seek for the lost gold mine," said Frank Reade.

"Since I have decided that the land-marks of the old Indian map are no longer to be relied upon, it seems to me we have nothing to guide us, and that we are to all intents no better off than we would be had we no map," said the doctor.

"That is true. It seems to me our chances of discovering the lost mine are becoming very small. It seems now we can only hope to find it by accident," assented Frank.

Beckbridge thoughtfully expectorated, and the stream shot by Pomp's head so closely that he had to dodge very swiftly to escape it.

"I consait, 'ordin' ter ther indications of ther Injun load-stun in my natur' thet there are some o' ther pizen varmint around. Jist run ther tally-ho up ther steep trail a bit an' we'll take a squint around," said the trapper.

The young inventor worked the guiding levers of his remarkable electric vehicle properly, and the coach began to ascend a steep trail which Beckbridge had indicated.

Then a scene of grandeur was revealed when the tally-ho reached a considerable elevation.

The rugged range was spread out below. There were towering peaks, broken ridges, yawning chasms and defiles, with hanging ledges. The entire scene was one of chaos and suggestive of upheaval of earthquake or volcanic action.

The doctor felt that his theory to account for the absence of the landmarks of the old Indian map or sign writing was verified by the appearance of the range as far as the eye could reach, and he said:

"I am more than ever convinced that this range has been entirely upheaved and convulsed by the action of volcanoes since our map of the route to the lost mine was drawn."

"Look yender. I see a file of moving objects away to the nor'west, but they are so fur off I can't say positive what they are, though ther Injun load-stun in my natur' are a drawing that away powerful," said the trapper suddenly.

"I'll get out my telescope, and then we can see the distant objects plainly," cried the doctor.

In a moment or so he was looking through the glass at the objects the trapper had discovered, and he said:

"You are right, friend Beckbridge. I see a file of mounted Indians—Sioux warriors, and also a band of squaws, who wear the blankets of the Blackfoot tribe. The entire party seems to be acting as escort for a train of ponies, laden with what I take to be buckskin sacks."

For a moment the treasure hunters looked at each other in silence. Then Beckbridge voiced the opinion of all, saying:

"I'll stake my skulp we see the squaws o' ther gold mine Injuns and ther Sioux allies makin' off with the treasure of the lost mine."

All were very much excited, and Frank Reade said:

"It seems to me it would be useless to pursue the Indians, and I would not attempt to rob them of the treasure they are carrying away in those buckskin sacks unless I was very sure I had a better right to it than they have."

"Then I reckon we mought as well give up all idea o' makin' a fortune an' findin' the gold mine and start fer hum," said Beckbridge, in a tone of disgust.

"Why so, friend trapper. It is evident that the Blackfoot Amazons and their Sioux allies have deserted the lost mine for good. They cannot remove the mine, though. We have observed the direction whence they came. Let us follow that course. Once we strike the trail of the party we have found by taking the back track I think we shall find the lost mine," said Frank.

"Well said. There is a chance to find the lost mine now which is much better than I dared hope for," said the doctor.

A moment later the Indians and the pack train disappeared in the distance.

CHAPTER XLV.

AT THE LOST GOLD MINE—CONCLUSION.

"I've got an idee them gold mine squaws wouldn't run off an' desert the mine if there was any more gold there. I consait they have worked the mine out an' carried off all the gold. Howsomever we'll go ahead an' see what we kin find out," said Beckbridge.

Frank Reade started the electric vehicle, and it was soon traversing the devious mountain trails on the way to the place where the Indians on the march had disappeared from sight.

In the course of a couple of hours the tortuous route was traversed, and the tally-ho arrived at a ridge along which the trail of the mounted band was readily discernible.

The tally-ho was guided along this trail in a retrograde course in order that it might reach the place from which the mounted Indians had started on their march.

There was no difficulty in following the trail for some miles. It led into the very heart of the mountain range. The course was an erratic and most devious one, but finally all trace of the hitherto plain trail was lost.

A mountain torrent which found its way southward through a deep channel was before the explorers. A short distance up the stream was a splendid waterfall. The disappearance of the trail at the brink of the mountain torrent was a mystery. It was too broad and swift, and its banks were too high to render it possible that the Indians could have forced it at this point.

"Beckbridge, can you suggest an explanation?" asked Frank, as he reversed the levers and stopped the electric conveyance on the edge of the mountain stream.

"Perhaps I kin, an' maybe I can't," was Beckbridge's rather unsatisfactory reply.

"Anyhow I'll make a scout. Come on, redskin," the trapper added.

Then he and Black Arrow sprang out of the electric tally-ho and went toward the waterfall.

Presently Beckbridge discovered a narrow causeway, and upon it, where it led down to the falls, the trapper discovered the well-nigh invisible imprints of hoofs.

"Ah, ha! the reds muffled the hoofs of their ponies, an' they left no tracks on the hard soil above where the trail disappeared. I consait I see the hull game. There's a passage under the falls," said Beckbridge.

He crept down to the water's edge, accompanied by the Indian, under the curtain of the water making the falls. Keeping close to obstructions which caused the falls, the two crossed the stream, and then, at the opposite side of the falls, where the sheet of falling water concealed its entrance, they beheld a cavern.

Into this spacious opening the trail of Indian ponies led, and the softer soil retained the imprint of moccasins; moreover, the rock was worn in a pathway leading into the cavern, thus indicating it had long been frequently traversed by many persons.

Into the cavern advanced Beckbridge and the Indian. A number of resinous torches were discovered near the entrance of the underground place, and one of these Beckbridge ignited, thus obtaining light for his further explorations.

The trapper and the Indian soon saw that they were surrounded by the evidence of man's handiwork. The cave was not the work of nature, Beckbridge decided at once that at last the lost gold mine was found.

As he continued to advance he found mining implements such as were in use among the Spaniards in Mexico hundreds of years ago. And he also discovered copper vessels, such as at a remote period were employed as melting pans in the mines of Mexico.

"We hev found the lost gold mine, by powder. But where's the gold, and where is my old pard, Owen Strathmore, the father of Little Sunshine, whom I have all along suspected was held a captive here," said Beckbridge at length.

The Indian had advanced ahead of the trapper, and his voice now reached the hearing of the latter.

"White hunter, come on!" cried Black Arrow. Beckbridge promptly advanced, and he found the Indian at a great copper door, which completely closed the mine passage.

"Door fast; no go furdur!" grunted the Indian. As he spoke another voice was heard. It was a faint and muffled utterance, and Beckbridge caught the words.

"For God's sake do not leave me here to perish."

A thrill shot through the old trapper's nerves. The voice emanated from the passage beyond the great copper door. Yank Beckbridge believed he had heard the voice of Little Sunshine's father.

"Who are ye?" the trapper shouted, coming close to the door.

"Owen Strathmore!" was the expected answer returned.

The voice was more distinct now, and as Beckbridge heard it he fairly leaped for joy, and called back:

"I'm Old Yank Beckbridge, yer pard. I'll git ye out all right. Keep cool and wait a bit."

The trapper and the Indian then swiftly retraced their way to the tally-ho. They made known their great discovery and quickly returned to the mine, accompanied by all save Pomp, who was left in care of the tally-ho.

The old trapper carried a lot of blasting cartridges and fuses with him now. He had secured them from the supply locker in the vehicle. The copper door in the hidden mine was soon reached, and by means of the cartridges it was blown open, and Owen Strathmore and the trapper were together once more, and Little Sunshine was in her father's arms.

Then an explanation immediately ensued. Strathmore told how he had set out to trail the gold mine Indians, that he had been discovered by them and made captive, and carried to the mines. How then he had since been kept a close prisoner there. His first question was if the rescue party had met the Indians.

Beckbridge made answer, and then Strathmore said:

"I have learned that this old mine was worked out by the Spaniards who discovered it years ago. But they had stored up a large quantity of gold quartz in a recess, intending to desert the worked out claim and take the precious ore with them, when they were discovered and massacred by the Indians.

"The ore was of no value to the Indians then. But the traditions of the tribe handed down the secret of the mine from generation to generation. Finally old Getchewan took to selling the gold the Spaniards had left behind.

"Now the squaws of the gold mine Indians have carried off all the gold that remained, and they are accompanied by a band of young northern Sioux braves who are to become their husbands.

"Not an ounce of gold has been left behind, and the great 'pocket' which was originally found here has been entirely exhausted.

"You see, therefore, that the discovery of the mine has not brought us fortune."

Our friends were somewhat disappointed, we may well believe. But Strathmore appeared to be the most troubled.

"I had counted on getting gold here and I am bitterly disappointed. So much depends on my success. If in less than one month's time I do not pay a certain man five thousand dollars, he will have the right to take my darling Little Sunshine from me. Where now shall I procure that money?" said Strathmore, in despairing tones, as he clasped his little daughter to his heart.

"Cheer up, old pard. Ther man you borrowed the five thousand dollars from is dead and he will never claim Little Sunshine as the forfeit of your failure ter pay his debt. He won't, by powder," said Beckbridge.

Then in reply to Strathmore's surprised questions, the trapper told his pard that the man the former had borrowed the money from, for which he had pledged Little Sunshine, was really his wife's nephew, Adam Marvan, and all about his plot to get possession of Little Sunshine and put her out of the way.

This was the first intimation Strathmore had received of the fact that his little daughter was the heiress of her grandfather's fortune, and his satisfaction may be imagined.

The party, after vainly searching the mine for any trace of gold, set out on their return journey. They had found the lost gold mine, but no wealth, and yet since they had saved a precious human life by rescuing Owen Strathmore, all felt that the expedition had not been in vain.

But they were destined to have a golden reward after all. Their way led them back by the caves of the volcano. All at once they heard an agonized cry from beside the trail. The tally-ho was stopped, and the party found the old hermit of the cave lying on his back among the rocks. He had accidentally fallen from a high ledge above, and he was now dying.

He signaled Frank Reade to come close, and the young inventor knelt beside the hermit and heard him reveal the secret of a rich gold claim which he had discovered near by.

In conclusion the old man murmured:

"Dying, I bequeath my claim to you and your party."

These were his last words.

The explorer buried the strange recluse, the mystery of whose life died with him, and then they sought his gold claim, according to directions he had given. It proved to be a very valuable find.

Having secured a number of specimens of the gold from the claim the hermit had given them, Frank and his party began their homeward journey without further delay.

One dark night, as the tally-ho was advancing through a mountain pass, just before the vehicle, as it turned a sharp corner among the rocks, Frank Reade with untold horror beheld a yawning chasm.

It was too late to stop the vehicle.

"Jump for your lives all!" shouted Frank as he made a leap from the box on the top of the tally-ho. His friends heard his shout and instantly obeyed. All leaped from the coach, and the succeeding moment the electric tally-ho crashed over the brink of the gulch and went down, down into the depths below.

Fortunately none of Frank's party were injured, and when this was ascertained the doctor produced a pocket-lantern, and after some exploration a way of descent to the bottom of the gulch was found, and Frank and the doctor went down. They found the electric tally-ho a complete wreck. Frank saw at once that it could never be repaired again, much as he regretted the fact. The party camped beside the chasm. The following morning Frank, assisted by the others, went down to the tally-ho and removed such valuables as he desired to save, and then they all took farewell of the shattered coach which had served them so well, and went forward on foot.

That evening they arrived at a mining camp, and horses were procured and the homeward journey was continued in company with a large band of returning miners.

In due time all Frank Reade's party reached home safely.

Some months later, all who had accompanied the young inventor on his search for the lost gold mine were assembled at Frank's beautiful home in Readestown. They had met for a business purpose, and on that occasion the gold claim left them by the old hermit was sold to a company of speculators and the money equally divided.

There is little to add in conclusion.

Little Sunshine's inheritance was secured for her by her father, and the future was a happy one for both parent and child.

Beckbridge married "the widdier" and settled down at Fort Smith.

Frank Reade and the doctor took a long rest at home, but we understand they are considering a new journey, but as yet no one has found out where they intend going.

[THE END.]

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